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**Provincial Playing Places and Performances in Early Modern England,
1559-1625**

by

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

University of Warwick, Centre for the Study of the Renaissance

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Declaration

This thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Provincial Playing Places and Performances in Early Modern England, 1559-1625

Summary

Most studies of Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre focus upon the drama and playhouses of London. However, if we are to have a fuller understanding of English Renaissance theatre and its place in early modern English culture, the wider world of regional English drama must also be taken into account. Playing places and vernacular play performances outside early modern London and its liberties are therefore made the subject of this thesis. The dissertation offers the first detailed account of regional playing spaces and their use for play performances in English in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period.

The thesis opens with an introduction in which provincial playing and staging conventions are discussed in general. Each subsequent chapter concentrates upon playing practices and performances in a representative space, focusing upon buildings (and the grounds of buildings) used for regional dramatic performances (e.g. town halls, schools and colleges, country houses). The chapters are illustrated with transcriptions from primary records and case-studies of known performances in specific spaces. I have supplemented study of published and unpublished dramatic records transcribed for the Records of Early English Drama Project (based at Toronto University) and the Malone Society with extensive primary research amongst those Elizabethan and Jacobean records yet to be transcribed or printed. Visual evidence is also included, furnishing a visual archive for scholars of early modern theatre spaces in England.

Research in many archives remains to be done. The survey of early modern English provincial theatre offered in this dissertation is therefore introductory. The aim has been to provide a starting point for those studying this rich and under-researched aspect of English Renaissance dramatic culture in the future.

Abbreviations and Symbols

LRO	Leicester Record Office, Leicester
PRO	Public Record Office, London
WRO	Warwick County Record Office, Warwick
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
RCHM	Royal Commission on Historical Monuments
REED	Records of Early English Drama
VCH	The Victoria County History of the Counties of England

Symbols used in author's transcriptions of early modern manuscripts

<.>	lost or illegible letters in the original
[...]	ellipsis of original matter

Original spelling and punctuation are preserved in the author's transcriptions of early modern manuscripts. Contractions in the original manuscripts are expanded and shown in italics.

Preface

The Scope of the thesis

The focus of this thesis is upon playing places and vernacular play performances outside early modern London and its liberties. The purpose-built playhouses of London's suburbs are not considered, therefore, although allusion is made to metropolitan theatres and playing spaces. The decision to concentrate upon investigating performances of vernacular plays (rather than considering performances of plays in other languages, or other dramatic forms such as masques, pageants, and dialogues as well) is pragmatic. A detailed account of all varieties of theatrical activity in the early modern provinces would require a study of much greater length than is permissible for a doctoral dissertation.

The cycles of Biblical plays associated with Corpus Christi are not treated in detail in the thesis (although usually written in English) for a similarly pragmatic reason. They are one variety of early modern regional theatre which has been made the subject of extensive research. For reasons of economy, entirely open-air playing areas such as 'rounds' and village greens (which only appear to have been used as theatrical venues occasionally in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period), and play productions in royal palaces (which have received considerable scholarly attention) are not made the subject of detailed study in the dissertation either.

CHAPTER ONE

Provincial Playing Places and Performances in Early Modern England, 1559-1625

Introduction

Much has been written about the stages and staging of Elizabethan and Jacobean dramas in the court and the theatres of Early Modern London. Far less attention has been devoted to the parallel world of provincial playing spaces and performances, as Ian Lancashire laments: 'we are still far from taking advantage of the surviving evidence for outdoor playing places and for the many great halls, inns, and churches that we know provided auspices for plays'.¹ Dramatic activity was not confined, however, to the metropolis in the reigns of Elizabeth and James. As early as 1910 J. T. Murray noted how 'not only London but most of the towns and villages of England were enthusiastic admirers of the drama and constantly demanding dramatic performances'.² Similarly, G. W. Boddy has spoken of 'the growing national enthusiasm for going to performances of plays' between 1558-1642.³

Regulations restricting the performance of Corpus Christi plays and other religious dramas may have inhibited one traditional branch of regional theatre but 'playing' itself continued to occupy a lively place in many provincial communities. In fact even Corpus Christi dramas were not 'censored out of existence by Protestant authorities as was once thought'.⁴ A number of the plays traditionally performed at Corpus Christi were preserved late into the sixteenth century.⁵

¹ Ian Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts and Records of Britain: A Chronological Topography to 1558* (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1984), p. xxxii.

² J. T. Murray, *English Dramatic Companies, 1558-1642*, 2 vols (London: Constable, 1910), I, p. xi.

³ G. W. Boddy, 'Players of Interludes in North Yorkshire in the Seventeenth Century', *North Yorkshire County Record Office*, 3 (1976), p. 118.

⁴ Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation: Protestantism, Patronage, and Playing in Tudor England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993), p. 5

⁵ As Lancashire records: 'Sherborne lasted until 1574, Wakefield until 1576, and York until 1580 (although Archbishop Grindal had managed to silence the Creed play in 1568 and the Pater Noster play in 1575). St Ives had a six-day play with a structure for Heaven in 1575; Shrewsbury presented Thomas Ashton's Passion play at least until 1569; Tewkesbury abbey rented out garments for a Christ as late as 1578; and Boston planned a Passion play in 1579.' [Lancashire, p. xxx.] In some places the tradition of performing Corpus Christi plays even survived into the seventeenth century (e.g. in 1612 Kendal and Manningtree still 'regularly set out, respectively a Corpus Christi play and a moral play as a requisite of their charter to have fairs.') [Lancashire, p. xxxi.]

In Kendal popular support was key to the continuing tradition of Corpus Christi plays, as a 1586 municipal record demonstrates: 'verry many and dyvers of the common Inhabitanes of this Incorporacion (suche of them only as rather preferr ther owne pryvate commodities and the common customes & vsages hear and more respecte the satisfyinge of their owne delighthes & fantasyes, by A greate deale than the Benyfite & common welthe of all others in generall (beinge the greater parte) doo covyte and earnestlye crye for the havinge of Corpus Christi play.' [REED: *Cumberland, Westmorland and Gloucestershire*, ed. by Audrey Douglas and Peter Greenfield (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1986), p. 171.]

Not only could various English towns and villages boast their own acting companies (e.g. Preston, Coventry and Blackburn), but the London troupes regularly left the capital for tours of the country.⁶ Some professional, patronised troupes toured exclusively in the provinces.⁷ Amateur play productions were staged occasionally in many towns and villages as well, for example as part of holiday celebrations or as fund-raising events.

Players mounted their performances in a variety of provincial spaces. In late sixteenth century London, professional players and playgoers had access to purpose-built theatres. Specialized playhouses were not to be found in most Elizabethan and Jacobean towns and villages.⁸ However, as the formulaic warrants issued to travelling companies from the latter sixteenth century reveal, a number of spaces were customarily used as temporary playing venues.⁹ Recorded provincial playing spaces include civic buildings (e.g. town halls), schools such as the grammar schools at Shrewsbury and Hitchin, university colleges, private houses (belonging to individuals from the noble to the yeomanry classes), churches and churchyards, and inns and alehouses.¹⁰ Performances were also mounted occasionally in outdoor venues such as the quarry at Shrewsbury and the village green at South Kyme in Lincolnshire.¹¹

⁶ Outbreaks of plague were not necessarily the only or key reason for going on tour. As Alan Somerset has pointed out, in some instances plague epidemics in London were matched in provincial towns, leading to similar inhibitions of performances. [Alan Somerset, '“How chances it they travel?”: Provincial Touring, Playing-Spaces, and the King's Men', *Shakespeare Survey*, 47 (1994), 45-60 (p. 50).]

⁷ Provincially-based noblemen's companies included Lord Abergavenny's Men and the Earl of Bath's Men. [J. T. Murray, *English Dramatic Companies, 1558-1642*, 2 vols (London: Constable, 1910), II, pp. 19-21.]

⁸ There were exceptions, however, which will be explored in more detail in chapter 7 on purpose-built venues (including the playhouses recorded at Bristol, Prescott, and York).

⁹ The first royal patent issued to an adult company (and a model for many later warrants) was that given to the Earl of Leicester's troupe in 1574: 'Elizabeth by the grace of God quene of England, &c. To all Justices, Mayors, Sheriffes, Baylyffes, head Constables, under Constables, and all other our officers and mynisters gretinge. Knowe ye that we of oure especiall grace, certen knowledge, and mere mocion have licenced and auctorised, and by these presentes do licence and auctourise, oure lovinge Subjectes, James Burbage, John Perkyn, John Lanham, William Johnson, and Roberte Wilson, servauntes to oure trustie and wellbeloved Cosen and Counseyllor the Earle of Leycester, to use, exercise, and occupie the arte and facultye of playenge Commedies, Tragedies, Enterludes, stage playes, and such other like as they have alredie used and studied, or hereafter shall use and studie, aswell for the recreacion of oure loving subjectes, as for oure solace and pleasure when we shall thincke good to see them, as also to use and occupie all such Instrumentes as they have alredie practised, or hereafter shall practise, for and during our pleasure.' [Cited in Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1970), p. 21.]

Similarly, when *Queen Anne's Men* were given a new warrant as royal players in 1609 they were authorised not only to play at the Red Bull and Curtain in London, but 'within anye Towne halles, Mouthalles and other convenient places within the libertye and freedome of any other City, universitie, Towne or Boroughe whatsoever within our Realmes and Domynions'.

[Cited in Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 33.]

¹⁰ Most of the dramas staged in university colleges were in Latin but vernacular dramas, such as

Such a diversity of playing spaces and such widespread theatrical activity merits attention; and, if we are to have a fuller understanding of Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatic culture, the wider world of regional playing spaces and performances needs to be taken into account. To ignore the evidence of provincial playing when discussing early modern English theatre not only limits our general understanding of the period's dramatic culture, but limits our understanding of theatre in the capital. The permanent playhouses of London evolved from a theatrical culture in which companies were accustomed to performing in the diverse spaces characteristic of provincial locations and early sixteenth century London.¹² As Gurr notes, plays written before the late 1590s were generally 'designed to be staged any where,' precisely because of the diverse auditoria companies might be required to use.¹³ Equally, if we are to appreciate the nature and importance of theatre in early modern English culture an awareness of its place, literal and metaphoric, in communities throughout the country is essential.¹⁴

I

Provincial Playing Spaces and Performances: The Evidence

When exploring the world of early modern provincial theatre we are confronted with several difficulties. Although a number of sources of information are available (including records of payments to acting troupes in church and civic accounts, and in the household books of aristocratic and gentry residences), the information which they provide may not be complete.

Richard Edwardes' *Palamon and Arcite* (performed in Christ Church, Oxford during Elizabeth's 1566 visit) were sometimes staged. [Frederick S. Boas, *University Drama in the Tudor Age* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1914), p. 388.]

¹¹ The quarry' is described in *REED: Shropshire*, ed. by J. Alan B. Somerset, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1994), II, p. 387.

The performance at South Kyme is described in David Wiles, *The Early Plays of Robin Hood* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1981), p. 38.

¹² In *The Place of the Stage*, Stephen Mullaney very carefully seeks to contextualise our understanding of the Elizabethan stage, but his focus is almost exclusively metropolitan (despite the reference to England in its title). If we are to contextualise Elizabethan and Jacobean stages, their place in the broader society of early modern England needs to be considered as well. [*The Place of the Stage: License, Play and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago: Chicago University, 1987).]

¹³ Andrew Gurr, 'The Bare Island', *Shakespeare Survey*, 47 (1994), 29-43 (p. 31).

¹⁴ Scholars have already offered suggestive interpretations of the social role and significance of drama in Elizabethan London. Louis Montrose, for example, argues that playing absorbed 'some vital functions of ritual within Shakespeare's society, [...] functions not adequately performed by [the] more central and officially sanctioned institutions'. But they have yet to extend their analyses to consider the place of theatre in English Renaissance culture more broadly. [Louis Montrose, 'The Purpose of Playing: Reflections Upon a Shakespearean Anthropology', *Helios* (1980), 51-74 (p. 64).]

In some towns records have been lost, and those that have been preserved may not record players' visits. This does not mean that visits were not made.

Records may never have existed of troupe visits to many parts of the country, since payment often was made by collecting or charging admission, or, as in the case of the gamehouse at Great Yarmouth from about 1538, no payment was made at all.¹⁵

At Chester, 'there survive only sporadic accounting records in which occur only six payments to touring entertainers'.¹⁶ However, the wording of a 1596 council order restricting the civic sponsoring of plays and bear baiting reveals that dramatic activity was more regular. The order opens by describing how 'by daylie experience it hath fallen out what great inconveniences there haue Arrysen by playes and bearebeates within this citie'.¹⁷

Surviving dramatic records can present difficulties as well. They can be ambiguous in their terminology and often yield little more information than the name of the acting company, the year of their visit and the amount they were paid.¹⁸ The names of plays are not usually noted,

¹⁵ Whitfield White, p. 22.

¹⁶ Somerset, ' "How chances it they travel?"', p. 46.

¹⁷ *REED: Chester*, ed. by Lawrence M. Clopper (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto; London: Manchester University, 1979), p. 184.

John Wasson notes some of the similar problems posed by Devon's records: 'We cannot know what was left out of the records but we have some clues that a very great deal was in fact omitted. For example, to judge by the Exeter receiver's accounts, one would conclude that the only Corpus Christi play presented was the one mounted by the Skinners in nine of the years between 1481-1497. If one troublemaker had not been summoned to the mayor's court in 1414 we would never know that Exeter once had a Corpus Christi cycle. [John Wasson, ed., *REED: Devon* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto, 1986), p. xxvii.]

¹⁸ Latin documents often use a range of terms for entertainers for which it can be difficult to find appropriate translations (especially as their precise original signification is often no longer clear). Even when accounts are in English the nature of the entertainments recorded is not always clear: for example, while most records of local and travelling troupes describe them as 'players' they are occasionally referred to as 'men'. (The Plymouth accounts record a payment to 'mr Edgecombs men on midsomer night' in 1567-8 which is believed to refer to Mr Edgecomb's players and a performance given by them.) [Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 238.] On these occasions we can be less certain that they were dramatic performers because such phraseology could be used to refer to a town or nobleman's group of musicians (e.g. the Earl of Essex had a troupe of musicians who appeared in towns such as Chester in 1591) or other liveried servants. [Clopper, p. 166.] Similar complications are presented by references to 'minstrels' and 'waits'. Although the surviving evidence generally indicates that they were musical performers, rather than players, we cannot be certain that this was always the case. For example, in 1575-6 the waits of Norwich visited the Mayor's Court and 'craved that they myght have leue to playe commodies [...] [act] vpon Interlutes & souch other [...] places and tragedes which shall seme to them mete'. Consent was 'graunted to them so farre as they do not play in the tyme of devine service and Sermones'. [*REED: Norwich*, ed. by David Galloway (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1984), p. 57.] Likewise, in Lincoln in 1564-5 the city waits are recorded as being involved in a partly dramatic entertainment, performing ' "Cry Christmas", a dialogue of three senators' at Christmas.

although there are exceptions. (At Bristol in 1575/6, for instance, it is recorded that the Lord Chamberlain's Men performed a 'play called the red Knight before *master* mayer and thaldermen in the yeld hall'.)¹⁹ Likewise, the specific spaces in which performances are staged are only occasionally recorded.²⁰ Further information can sometimes be extracted indirectly from payments for the preparation or repair of a space used for playing (e.g at Gloucester in 1562-3 a payment to the Duchess of Suffolk's players is followed by a payment 'for the makynge of the skaffold at the Bothall & for nayles there', revealing the location of the performance and an aspect of its staging).²¹

Other less direct sources of evidence include the legal archives of municipal and ecclesiastical authorities. The documentation of unlicensed or controversial performances, and arrests following misdemeanours by actors or audience members, can be especially revealing. Amongst the hall papers for Leicester there is a record of an intriguing incident in 1583-4 involving the Earl of Worcester's players. Having been refused civic permission to play, some of the actors accosted the Mayor in the street and insisted that 'they wold playe wheyther he wold or not & in dispyte of hym with dyvers other evyl & contemptuous wordes'.²² The accompanying documentation notes how they were later to play at their inn, but were obliged to offer an apology to the mayor as the prologue to their performance.²³ Likewise, the presence of Lord Berkeley's players in the church at Lenton, Nottinghamshire, in 1580 is disclosed in a record of their involvement in a fight there.²⁴

In addition, there are a number of contemporary descriptions of provincial performances. While these accounts are few and vary in their detail and reliability, some information about regional drama is afforded. One of the most well-known reports is that of Robert Willis,

[Lancashire, p. 171.] In this doctoral survey references to minstrels and waits have not usually been treated as evidence of dramatic activity.

¹⁹ REED: *Bristol*, ed. by Mark C. Pilkinton (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1997), p. 112.

²⁰ In the case of church and household records there is some guide to the likely locations (if the buildings or early modern plans of them are extant). The same is not true of unmarked municipal records. A number of spaces could be available in towns for civic sponsored performances, ranging from a town hall to a mayor's house. Even those entries which do specify a space (such as a 'hall') can be problematic as the places cannot necessarily be identified (especially if the building has been lost or transformed by subsequent architectural work).

²¹ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 299.

²² Although the players had been denied permission to perform they had not been unrewarded. The Mayor had given them 'an Angell towards there dynner'.

[REED: *Leicestershire*, ed. by Alice B. Hamilton, forthcoming.]

²³ Hamilton, REED: *Leicestershire*, forthcoming.

²⁴ Lancashire, p. 166.

recording a performance of *The Cradle of Security* (a morality play) which he witnessed while a boy at Gloucester Town hall (between 1565-75).²⁵

Actors' accounts (in personal papers and publications) sometimes afford an insight into touring life and provide evidence of the places companies visited as well. In Richard Tarlton's *Jests* he alludes to several towns which he visited as a player (including Worcester, 'Bristow' and Salisbury); and the letters Edward Alleyn wrote while on tour (to his wife and his father-in-law, theatrical entrepreneur, Philip Henslowe) illuminate the route of some of his peregrinations with Lord Strange's Men in 1593.²⁶ Dramatic allusions to provincial playing and performances are also to be found within a number of Elizabethan and Jacobean plays.²⁷

As is evident from the sources cited above, reconstructing a detailed picture of early modern provincial theatrical culture in England is a painstaking process, requiring the accumulation and synthesis of diverse forms of information. We must also be 'ready to extrapolate from the known to the unknown, and at the same time be cautious about doing so'.²⁸ A general account of provincial theatre can be given, however, as the following sections in this introductory chapter will demonstrate.

The customs surrounding provincial performances by professional touring players and locally-sponsored or amateur productions are surveyed in parts II and III, respectively.²⁹ This overview of regional theatrical activity is supplemented in part IV by a discussion of provincial attitudes to, and regulation of drama in the early modern period.

²⁵ Willis' account of this performance will be discussed in detail in chapter 2 (see section beginning on p. 77).

²⁶ E. K. Chambers notes how: 'on 2 May he writes from Chelmsford, and on 1 August from Bristol. Here he had received a letter by Richard Cowley and he sends his reply by a kinsman of Thomas Pope. At the moment of writing he is ready to play *Harry of Cornwall*. He asks that further letters may be sent to him by the carriers to Shrewsbury, West Chester, or York, "to be keptt till my Ld Stranges players com"'. [E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), II (repr. 1961), p. 124.]

²⁷ Nashe's *Summer's Last Will and Testament* appears to incorporate references to its own performance, and the performance of another play, at the Archbishop's Palace in Croydon.

²⁸ Somerset, ' "How chances it they travel?"', p. 54.

²⁹ Professional and locally-sponsored or amateur theatre are dealt with separately, as the auspices for, and the organisation of, their performances usually differed in several ways.

II

Professional Theatre in the Provinces*Travelling Players and their Routes*

For the national travelling companies there were some established touring routes associated with the early-modern major roads network. Towns on the most important routes often played host to a number of professional and amateur companies annually throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. (For example, Exeter 'though somewhat remote from London, lay at the cross-roads of several important routes and [...] attracted touring performers continuously from 1370-1630s').³⁰ At the same time, troupes did venture into areas less well served by the road system and performed in smaller places such as Pershore, as they travelled between larger places of resort. Indeed, despite the lack of commodious or speedy transport travelling players are known to have reached even the most far-flung parts of the country.³¹ In September 1588, Lord Scrope wrote from Carlisle to William Asheby, the English ambassador in Scotland, to say that the Queen's players 'had been for ten days in that town', having heard 'from Roger Asheton of the king's desire that they should visit Scotland'. He adds that he had 'sought them out from "the furthest parte of Langheshire"', where they had been on tour.³²

The reasons for planning tours based upon the main road networks of Britain are 'obvious', as MacLean notes: 'important cities or market towns on main roads were more accessible and accommodating, with guaranteed audiences'.³³ However, when selecting which of the traditional touring circuits to follow each year companies may have been guided by other motives: for example, troupes often appear to have favoured routes which passed through areas 'where their patron's name' would carry greater weight and 'guarantee of reward'.³⁴

³⁰ Sally-Beth MacLean, 'Touring Routes: "Provincial Wanderings" or Traditional Circuits?' *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 6 (1993), 1-14 (pp. 1-2).

³¹ The average speed of travel in early modern England (whether by foot, horseback or a combination of both) is difficult to calculate. In his study of Medieval travelling Ohler concludes that: 'nineteen miles a day was a good average for travellers on land. Even on horseback it was only possible to do more than two hundred miles in ten days if a traveller changed his horses and had no rest days, even after four or six days'. [Cited in MacLean, 'Touring Routes', p. 12.] As MacLean notes, there was a general increase in the 'speed of travelling in the later Middle Ages and early modern era', but the distances that could be covered in any given day remained relatively limited. [MacLean, 'Touring Routes', p. 12.]

³² Cited in Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, II, p. 11.

The company was performing at Lathom House (one of the Earl of Derby's Lancashire residences) on the 6th and 7th of July and returned to Derby's house at Knowsley (Lancashire) for the 6th and 7th of September before eventually heading to Edinburgh. [REED: *Lancashire*, ed. by David George (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1991, p. xi.)

³³ MacLean, 'Touring Routes', p. 1.

³⁴ For instance, until 1565, Oxford's men toured mainly in 'the south and east', the 'principal sphere of influence' of the de Vere family (e.g. their family seat was at Hedingham Castle in Essex).

Companies may even have been instructed to pursue their travels along such routes by patrons seeking to use dramatic patronage to publicize their power and status in territories where they claimed some position.³⁵ In similar fashion, the extension of tours into areas where patrons did not traditionally exercise influence allowed the display of their wealth and power more widely.

The association of dramatic patronage with status and power explains, and is further demonstrated by, the fact that entertainers patronised by royalty had the most 'extensive annual itineraries' and 'received the highest rewards and most generous performance conditions' in Elizabethan and Jacobean England.³⁶ Indeed, the wide-ranging tours of royal troupes can be seen as paralleling the royal progresses (e.g. of Elizabeth I), allowing the regent's name and a symbol of royal power to be borne to parts of the country far from London and the Court.

Life on the road

In 1910 J. T. Murray estimated that at least 37 Greater Men's companies, 79 Lesser Men's Companies, 5 Players' companies and 27 Town companies were active outside London between 1559-1645.³⁷ Subsequent research has identified many more troupes and performances and it is likely that further acting companies will be discovered. Competition was, as E. K. Chambers notes, 'considerable, for in the provinces the London companies found rivals in the shape of other companies which rarely or never came to London at all, but were none the less substantial and permanent organizations.'³⁸

The nature and quality of touring life remains under investigation, the known evidence inviting contradictory interpretations. Travelling on tour was certainly not without its dangers, physical and material. There are records of players being attacked and robbed, and of their vehicles being damaged. In Canterbury in 1596-7 a Mr. Foskew was presented 'for breiking the peice and drawing blude vppon one of the Queenes plears'; and in Southampton a Mr. Bush, gentleman, paid a fine of five shillings 'for hurting one of ye players' in

[MacLean, 'Touring Routes', p. 9.]

³⁵ To patronise an acting troupe was one way of demonstrating one's wealth and nobility in an age when conspicuous consumption and display became the markers of gentility.

[See J. A. Sharpe, *Early Modern England: A Social History*, 2nd edn (London: Edward Arnold, 1987; repr. 1991), p. 171 and p. 167.]

³⁶ MacLean, 'Touring Routes', p. 10.

³⁷ Cited in Boddy, p. 188.

³⁸ E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), I, pp. 340-1.

1591-2.³⁹ Meanwhile, in 1608-9 Thomas Bradford of Ludlow was called before the Woodstock Portsmouth Court having stolen money from one of the Lord Chandos' Men, when the troupe visited the town and stayed at The Bell.⁴⁰ In Faversham in 1597-8 several people were obliged to pay a fine of fifteen shillings and nine pence 'vppon missvsage of a Wagon or Coache of the Lord Bartlettes players'.⁴¹

When touring through many towns there was a danger of losing one's playing license (or of it being stolen) as well, as is demonstrated by a case which came before the mayor and corporation at Leicester in 1583-4. On the 3rd March,

certen playars whoe said they were the *seruantes* of the Quenes Maiesties Master of the Revelles whoe required lisenche to play [...] for there aucthorytye showed forth an Indenture of Lycense from one mr Edmunde Tylneye esquire Master of her Maiestes Revelles of the one *parte* And George Haysell of wisbiche in the Ile of Ely in the County of Cambridge gentleman on the other *parte*.⁴²

On 6th March, another group of players arrived 'who sayd the forsayd Playars were not lawfully aucthorysed & yat they had taken from them there *commissions*. but it is vntrue for they forgat there box at the In in Leicester & so these men gat yt.'⁴³

Touring could also be a life of physical privations and economic difficulties, as the Earl of Pembroke's company discovered while on tour in 1593. Straitened financial circumstances forced the company to disband and return to London, as Henslowe recounted in a letter to Edward Alleyn in September 1593:

As for my lorde a penbrockes wch you desier to knowe wheare they be they are all at home and hauffe ben t[his] v or sixe weackes for they cane not saue ther

³⁹ REED: *East Kent*, ed. by James Gibson, forthcoming.

REED: *Hampshire*, ed. by Peter Greenfield and Jane Cowling, forthcoming.

⁴⁰ Bradford admitted that 'he being *servant* to certeine players belonginge to ye Lord Chandios cominge to Buck Towne, he founde a litle key in the *parlour* at one mr porters house the Inkeper of ye bell wherewith he there opened the deske of one Richard Durrand one of the said players & there fyndinge [about] xs in siluer or thereabouts in a litle purse in the same desk he opened the purse & tooke forthe the said mony and locked ye desk againe'. [REED: *Oxfordshire*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston, forthcoming.]

⁴¹ Gibson, REED: *East Kent*, forthcoming.

⁴² Hamilton, REED: *Leicestershire*, forthcoming.

⁴³ Hamilton, REED: *Leicestershire*, forthcoming.

carges (charges) [w]th trauell as I heare & weare fayne to pane (pawn) the[r] parell
for ther carges.⁴⁴

The difficulty of maintaining a large adult company on the road was also advanced by Lord Strange's company of players when they sought permission to resume playing in London following an outbreak of plague in 1591-2.⁴⁵ In their petition to the Privy Council they point out that 'oure companie is Greate, and thearbie our chardge intollerable, in travellinge the Countrie. And the contynuaunce thereof wil be a meane to bringe us to diuision and separacion'.⁴⁶

Contemporary dramatic allusions generally emphasise the hardships of touring life. Tucca's indirect description of life as a travelling player in *Poetaster* (1601) is a typical example: 'If hee pen for thee once, thou shalt not need to travell, with thy pumps full of gravell, any more, after a blind jade and a hamper'.⁴⁷ Similarly, in Dekker's *News From Hell* (1606) a character speaks of 'a companie of country players,...that with strowling were brought to deaths door'.⁴⁸ Another portrait of the privations of touring life is found in the satire upon travelling troupes in *The Raven's Almanac* [1609]: 'Players, by reason they shal have a hard winter, and must travell on the hoofe, will lye suckling there for pence and 2 pences, like young pigges at a sow newly farrowed.'⁴⁹ These are literary descriptions and not necessarily accurate representations of touring life. There is also a note of exaggeration and stereotyping in these examples, suggesting that their descriptions should not be taken entirely at face-value. Nonetheless, the clichéd image of the touring actor which they present would not have been comic or satirical unless it contained at least an element of truth.

However, many Elizabethan and Jacobean actors 'spent a good part of their lives upon the road' (and, in most cases, by choice, it seems).⁵⁰ Travelling life was presumably not without

⁴⁴ Henslowe is cited in David George, 'Shakespeare and Pembroke's Men', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 32 (1981), 305-323 (p. 306).

⁴⁵ Gurr notes that when the 'amalgamated company went on its travels it does seem sometimes to have divided into its constituent parts- the records show a joint tour in the summer of 1593 and separate tours in 1592 and the spring of 1594.' [Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 27.]

⁴⁶ Cited in Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 27.

⁴⁷ Cited in W. F. Rothwell, 'Was there a typical Elizabethan Stage?', *Shakespeare Survey*, 12 (1959), 15-12 (p. 17).

⁴⁸ Cited in Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, I, p. 332.

⁴⁹ Cited in Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, I, p. 332.

⁵⁰ Rothwell, p. 17.

As Andrew Gurr has noted, the tradition of touring was 'amazingly durable. Some players, odd though it may seem to today's householders, appear to have actively chosen a life of travelling in preference to living and working in London.' [Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), p. 40.]

its pleasures and rewards, therefore. The research of more recent scholars, such as John Wasson, David George and Alan Somerset, has revealed and drawn attention to some of the more rewarding aspects of touring life, especially when a company's itinerary primarily involved country house performances. (When troupes visited private houses they could often look forward to free food and good, safe accommodation.)⁵¹

The Decision to Tour

The London companies may not always have had a great deal of choice when deciding whether or not to tour, as the closure of the playhouses (e.g. during plague) periodically left them without employment. Although there was a chance that regional towns would be similarly afflicted, touring was an obvious option for companies facing the threat of an indefinite suspension of their activities in the capital. However, it would be a mistake to think that the metropolitan troupes only toured during such times. As the records show, many companies made some kind of tour annually even when there were not plague epidemics in the City. Indeed, as Somerset observes 'there was not an observable rise in the numbers of visits during plague outbreaks'.⁵² Likewise, when Leicester's troupe asked their patron for a licence to travel in 1572 they described touring as a customary activity for themselves and other acting companies. They wanted the licence to 'certifye that we are your household servants when we shall have occasion to travayle amongst our frendes as we do usuallye once a yere, and as other noble-mens Players do and have done in tyme past'.⁵³

Some contemporaries offered their own cynical explanations for companies' decisions to tour, as when Donald Lupton described how players 'sometimes [...] fly into the country; but 'tis a suspicion that they are either poor or want clothes, or else company, or a new play; or do as some wandering sermonists, make one sermon travel and serve twenty churches'.⁵⁴ Certainly, touring allowed players some rest from the intensive repertory systems of the metropolitan theatres. However, the actors may also have enjoyed the challenge of adapting their performances for different stages and audiences as well.

⁵¹ Somerset, for instance, suggests that the tours of professional companies may have been more akin to 'working holidays'. [Somerset, ' "How chances it they travel?"', p. 60.]

⁵² Somerset, ' "How chances it they travel?"', p. 50.

⁵³ Cited in Somerset, ' "How chances it they travel?"', pp. 52-3.

⁵⁴ Donald Lupton, *London and the Country Carbonadoed and Quartered into Several Characters* (1632), cited in Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Profession of Player in Shakespeare's time, 1590-1642* (Princeton and Guildford: Princeton University, 1984) p. 181.

The length of tours and mode of travelling

There is limited definite evidence for the length of companies' tours. Most are likely to have lasted for several months, but they could vary from brief trips to a particular region to virtually year-round perambulations. For similar reasons, it is difficult to generalise about the number of places companies would visit. A troupe's itinerary could include more than thirty stops, depending on the length of the tour.⁵⁵ Other tours may have included only a handful of stops. However many venues they visited, travelling troupes would usually have been relying upon their feet and, possibly, a horse and waggon, to transport themselves, their belongings, and their theatrical 'gear' (i.e. costumes and properties) between venues, as Jonson's allusion in *Poetaster* indicates.⁵⁶

The size of professional touring troupes

Average company sizes on tour are, likewise, hard to calculate accurately as troupe numbers were rarely noted. Where they *were* recorded the evidence testifies to varied sizes. John Wasson notes, that in 1569-70 Sussex's company was recorded as consisting of six men at Ludlow, but argues that 'even at this late date the average size [...] seems to have been four', company sizes only growing 'significantly' after 1572.⁵⁷ Certainly, later sources and records testify to the existence of larger troupes. The company Dekker satirises in *News from Hell*

⁵⁵ When touring in 1588-9 the Queen's Men visited at least twenty-seven different places and some more than once (Faversham, Canterbury [x 2], New Romney [x 2], Lydd [x 2], Rye [x 2], Winchester [x 2], Oxford, Gloucester, Leicester [x 2], Ipswich [x 2], Norwich [x 2], Dublin, Maidstone [x 2], Coventry [x 2], Lathom House, Knowsley Hall, Carlisle, New Park, Nottingham [x 2], Lynn, Dover [x 2], Folkestone [x 2], Hythe [x 2], Lyme Regis, Aldeburgh, Reading). [Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998), pp. 178-9.] As we discover new records these figures will probably need to be revised upwards.

⁵⁶ From a number of early records we know that players may have occasionally travelled exclusively on foot: for example in Lydd a payment was made in 1525-6 to 'foote players' of Essex and to 'ij companyes of foote players' in 1529-30. However, as Dawson notes, this appellation may have been intended to 'distinguish these companies from a more usual sort.' [Giles Dawson, ed., 'Records of Plays and Players in Kent, 1450-1642', *Malone Society: Collections*, VII (Oxford: Oxford University, 1965), p. xvi.] Certainly, to make some use of a waggon and horse(s) appears to have been common practice amongst travelling players and a number of records describe troupes equipped in this way: for instance at Stourbridge in 1610 'plaiers with ... their cartes and waggons' were recorded at the Crown Inn. [David Galloway, 'Records of Early Drama in the Provinces and what they may tell us about the Elizabethan Theatre', *The Elizabethan Theatre*, VII, ed. by G. R. Hibbard (London: Macmillan, 1981), 82-110 (p. 97).]

As noted above, the reliance of travelling players upon the road system could account for their tendency to follow established provincial routes, for these generally took the country's major highways as their guide. One conventional touring route is described by MacLean and Somerset as the 'south-eastern circuit'. Travelled 'by both the Queen's Men (1584) and Worcester's Men (in 1591)' this circuit included following 'the Roman road through Maidstone and Canterbury to the Kent Coast, and then [traversing] the coast road between towns such as Dover, Folkestone, Hythe, Lydd and Rye.' [Somerset, ' "How chances it they travel ?"', p. 52.]

⁵⁷ John Wasson, 'Professional Actors in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 3 (1984), 1-11 (p. 4).

(1606) is described as 'being nine in number, one sharer and the rest journeymen'; and 'xiiij Players' made up the Lord Derby's troupe who visited Chatsworth House (Derbyshire) in 1611.⁵⁸ Likewise, in the Clifford household books the mean number of players during the early modern period is eleven, although a company as small as five players was recorded in 1596 and the largest was made up of nineteen players (1609).⁵⁹

There is some evidence that professional playing troupes collaborated occasionally when touring, receiving rewards for joint performances. In 1599-1600, for example, Leicester's corporation gave twenty shillings to 'The Erle of derbyes players & The Erle of dudleys players, ioyned (at this present) togeyther as one company'; and in 1590-1 the Corporation at Poole alluded to money 'geuen the Quenes Maiestis players that playede her with the children off her Maiestis Chapell'.⁶⁰

Whether these amalgamations were negotiated prior to touring or opportunistic collaborations (e.g. as a result of arriving in the same town together) is usually impossible to determine, although one would imagine that some preparation time was necessary (e.g. one or both companies' players might have to learn a new play, and the play or plays to be performed jointly would need to be cast differently for an amalgamated troupe).⁶¹

⁵⁸ The Chatsworth and Dekker references are cited in Bentley, *The Profession of Player*, p. 185.

⁵⁹ John M. Wasson, 'Elizabethan and Jacobean Touring Companies', *Theatre Notebook*, 42 (1988), 51-57 (p. 55).

David Bradley notes that even larger travelling companies may not have been unknown, citing the example of a troupe which visited Norwich in 1635. The company apparently consisted of 'twenty-eight persons'. As Bradley comments: 'Not all of them can have been actors. The list certainly includes two wardrobe-keepers, and others who may have been "necessary attendants", fencers, musicians, and the like' but it does imply 'that travelling companies, far from being small or reduced, might be of very great size'. [David Bradley, *From Text to Performance in the Elizabethan Theatre: Preparing the Play for the Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), p. 56.]

⁶⁰ Leicestershire Record Office, Hall Papers 1598-1600, BR II/ 18/ 5, fol. 628. [This reference was kindly drawn to my attention by Professor Bernard Capp, University of Warwick.]

REED: Dorset / Cornwall, ed. by Rosalind Conklin Hays and C. E. McGee, Sally L. Joyce and Evelyn S. Newlyn (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1999), p. 246.

In some cases it is not clear whether troupes rewarded together were being rewarded for a joint performance. In 1623 at Congleton, for example, eleven shillings was bestowed 'upon the Kings players and the Earle of Derbyes the xiiith daie of december who played at the swanne'. [Alan C. Coman, 'The Congleton Accounts: Further evidence of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama in Cheshire', *REED Newsletter*, 14:1 (1989), 3-18 (p. 9).] The record suggests that the two troupes performed together at the Swan but does not state this explicitly. It is possible therefore that they performed separately at the inn on the same day.

⁶¹ At Leicester the reference to the two companies being joined 'at present' suggests that their amalgamation was not intended to be of long duration and might have been a recent arrangement. As there is evidence of actors in different acting companies communicating while travelling, it is possible that such amalgamations were sometimes arranged when troupes were already on tour. In 1581, Thomas Bayly, 'one of Shrewsbury's players' wrote to 'Thomas Bandewine (Bawldwine?)', one of Dudley's players, 'asking for more play texts'. [John M. Wasson and Barbara D. Palmer, 'Professional Players in Northern England, Parts I and II', a paper given

In many cases the decision to mount joint performances could have been pragmatic. If two playing troupes were touring the same region or visiting the same town offering to perform together was one way of ensuring that both companies received rewards. Other collaborations may have been politically motivated (and arranged at the wish of one or both of the patrons). In Faversham in 1589-90, twenty shillings was paid 'to the Queenes players and therle of Essex players', suggesting that they might have performed together.⁶² If there was a temporary amalgamation of the two companies, it might have been initiated by the Earl's Men (and at their patron's request or suggestion), the collaboration of the two troupes offering a symbolic means of associating the Earl with the Queen (and her power) and of advertising and promoting the Earl's reputation and importance as an intimate of the Monarch.⁶³

Travelling players may have collaborated occasionally with troupes of musicians as well, the latter often being patronised by the same person. In 1577-8 at Nottingham, for instance, ten shillings was paid 'vnto the Earle of Warwycke musysyons and plears'; in 1578-9 five shillings was given to 'Lord haworth plears and mvsyssyons'; and in 1587-8 payments were made to the Earl of Sussex's 'musicions & players' and to 'the Erle of Essex musicions, and to his players'.⁶⁴ Similarly, at Coventry in 1583 the corporation rewarded 'Lord Barkeles players and musicions', and 'Lord dudles players and musicions'.⁶⁵ These payments could

at the Annual Meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America, at Washington D. C., 1997, 1-21 (p. 13).] As the latter case reveals, it may not have been unusual for some travelling troupes to share plays or to carry the same plays in their travelling repertoires. This might have made collaborations between some troupes more straightforward. Companies familiar with some of the same plays as each other could nominate a commonly known text for performance. In such instances preparing for a joint performance might only have involved agreeing upon a new casting of the play, using actors from both troupes.

⁶² Gibson, *REED: East Kent*, forthcoming.

⁶³ By 1589 the Earl's intimacy with the Queen was well-known. He was her acknowledged favourite and in 1587 had been made Master of the Horse; the post once held by Leicester, the Queen's earlier favourite. [Wallace MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I* (London: Edward Arnold, 1993), p. 394.] In 1589-90 Essex might have had more specific reasons for wishing to promote his status and his relationship with the Queen. During this period the Earl was seeking to increase his power and reputation through his involvement in Britain's foreign military campaigns. This included petitioning Elizabeth for military commands. In 1589, he petitioned to be allowed to participate in 'the Portugal expedition', and when the Queen refused him permission to join the expedition he fled from court secretly, joining the fleet 'off the Spanish Coast'. [MacCaffrey, p. 395.] Later in the year he petitioned unsuccessfully for the command of the 'forces sent to Normandy to assist Henry IV in Autumn 1589'. [MacCaffrey, p. 396.] The active touring of his players (and their collaboration with the Queen's own troupe) was perhaps one of the ways in which he hoped to promote his national image and encourage the Queen to grant him more important military and government offices.

⁶⁴ *REED: Nottinghamshire*, ed. by John C. Coldewey, forthcoming.

⁶⁵ *REED: Coventry*, ed. by R. W. Ingram (London: Manchester University; Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1981), p. 300.

simply indicate that the troupes contained specialist musicians, but the phrasing used suggests that the musicians were not considered to be part of the playing troupe. Furthermore, there are records of troupes of patronised musicians travelling and performing independently and we know that numerous nobles patronised troupes of musicians as well as players.⁶⁶ Presumably, the troupes of musicians provided musical accompaniment for the play performances. They may have provided music prior to performances and between acts as well, as was to become customary in the indoor playhouses of the capital.⁶⁷

Plays

Precisely what texts were taken on tour, and how many plays were to be found in a standard company's repertory, is unknown. Companies do not appear to have kept such records and the plays which visiting troupes performed are not usually specified in contemporary notices.⁶⁸ There are exceptions, as noted above, but the number of named plays is few in proportion to the number of performances known to have occurred. However, working from the known repertories of companies based in the London theatres, it is possible to identify plays likely to have constituted the touring repertories of the major metropolitan troupes.⁶⁹

Some scholars have suggested that the texts chosen for touring were shortened for provincial performance. David George, for example, notes that the plays which the Earl of Pembroke's Men were obliged to sell to the publishers in 1594 (including *Edward II* and *The Taming of a Shrew*) were apparently 'cut, altered, and corrupted versions of longer texts', concluding that

⁶⁶ The 'earle of essex his musitions' were rewarded by the Dean and Chapter at Chester in 1591-2. Clopper, p. 166.

⁶⁷ More usually, players were probably obliged to provide their own musical accompaniment. Certainly, it appears to have been customary for acting companies to carry instruments with them on tour and for troupes to include one or more musically able members. The patent issued to the Earl of Leicester's Men in 1572 licensed the players not only to perform 'Commedies, Tragedies, Enterludes, Stage playes, and such other like as they have alredie used and studied', but also 'to use and occupie all such Instrumentes as they have alredie practised, or hereafter shall practise'. [Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 21.]

⁶⁸ Bentley notes how 'only one account I know of states just how many plays a London troupe was carrying. When the Salisbury Court players visited Oxford in July 1634, one of the company told Thomas Crosfield, a Fellow of Queen's that "They came furnished with fourteen plays".' [Bentley, *The Profession of Player*, p. 188.] However, the satirical account of Lupton cited above suggests that some companies travelled with a much more limited repertory.

⁶⁹ In some cases we can posit the inclusion of a play in a company's touring repertory with greater certainty, prompt copies apparently adapted for such performances surviving: for example, the Chicago copy of *A Looking Glass for London and England* (modified as a prompt text) carries the name of Gilbert Reason in a stage direction and, therefore, is likely to have been used by Prince Charles's company sometime between 1613-1625, when Reason is believed to have been touring with the troupe, as its leading member.

[C. J. Sisson, 'Shakespeare Quartos as prompt-copies, with some account of Cholmeley's Players and a new Shakespeare allusion', *Review of English Studies*, 70 (1942), 129-143 (p. 134).]

'lacking full-length prompt books, Pembroke's men seem to have sold their shortened touring texts.'⁷⁰ Such arguments have been questioned more recently by scholars such as Andrew Gurr.⁷¹

Travelling companies did not necessarily work exclusively from manuscript prompt books. Many of the play-texts published in early modern England were prepared with the needs of companies (both in London and elsewhere) in mind, occasionally including prefaces addressed to potential performers. Hugh Jackson's 1578 edition of *The Commodity of the moste vertuous and Godlye Susanna* is accompanied by the note that 'Eyght persons may easily play it'; while the title-page of *The Conflict of Conscience* (1572) gives 'The Actors names, deuided into six partes, most conuenient for such as be disposed, either to show this Comedie in priuate houses, or otherwise'.⁷² As well as suggesting that acting troupes sometimes worked from printed texts, such addresses anticipate the adaptation of texts for different performances. As C. J. Sissons has shown, printed texts were sometimes used as prompt-copies, although the practice may have been more common amongst amateur companies.⁷³

What evidence there is indicates that professional troupes generally used the same play repertory for all their touring performances, although there may have been occasional exceptions.⁷⁴ Some plays could have been written for specific private house performances,

⁷⁰ George, 'Shakespeare and Pembroke's Men', p. 306.

⁷¹ Gurr notes that, in theory, such adapted play texts would need to have been relicensed by Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels. However, Herbert's papers contain 'no record that he ever approved any texts that had been revised specifically for touring'. He also argues that the so-called 'cut' texts show no evidence of having been adapted 'to allow fewer players to perform them'; and notes that such reductions would not have been necessary as touring troupes appear to have differed little in size from companies working in London. [Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 42.]

⁷² Cited in Sisson, pp. 132-3.

⁷³ He describes the Chicago copy of *A Looking Glass for London and England* as an 'actual surviving example of a printed quarto adapted for use as a prompt copy with manuscript notes and stage-directions'. [Sisson, p. 134.]

In his *Mayor of Queenborough* Middleton satirises the practice, incorporating a contemptuous reference in Act five, scene one to thieves who 'only take the name of country comedians to abuse simple people/ with a printed play or two, which they bought at Canterbury for six pence'. [Cited in Sisson, p. 135.]

⁷⁴ We cannot be certain that troupes performed the same plays privately and publicly, but those references which are preserved in household records tend to support this conclusion. For instance, a production of *Titus Andronicus* is recorded at the house of Sir John Harington at Burley-on-the-hill in Rutland on January 1st, 1595-6. We know from Henslowe's records at the Rose theatre that the play had already been performed publicly in London. (On the 24th January, 1594, Henslowe's Diary records receipts of 'iij li viijs' at 'titus & ondronicus'.) [William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. by Jonathan Bate (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 69-70.] The performance at Burley-on-the-Hill may have been given by the same players as the troupe was described as coming from London. The players may have been 'Shakespeare's Chamberlain's men'. [Bate, p. 43.]

for instance. In her edition of Peele's *The Old Wives' Tale*, Patricia Binnie suggests that the play was written for performance as part of wedding celebrations at a noble house, although she is not able to identify the particular marriage or location.⁷⁵

In similar fashion, country house hosts may have occasionally provided travelling companies with whole plays or additions of their own composition (as Hamlet was to do when Shakespeare introduced strolling players to his stage). Certainly, a number of Elizabethan noblemen and women are known to have been passionate supporters of drama and to have indulged in dramatic writing themselves as, for example, the Earl of Oxford, 6th Earl of Derby, William Percy and Elizabeth Cary.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Binnie describes how 'there is something about the mood of the play that makes the thought that it was written for a marriage entertainment attractive'. [Patricia Binnie, ed., George Peele's *The Old Wives' Tale* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1980), p. 14.]

⁷⁶ The Earl of Oxford is known to have patronised several troupes, including a boy company (possibly formed from an amalgamation of boys from Paul's and the Chapel, under Lyly's management). (John Lyly received a payment for a company who performed at Court on New Year's Eve, 1584, described as the 'Erle of Oxforde his servaunts'. One of the plays is likely to have been Lyly's *Campaspe*, the 1584 title-page (2nd edition) of which alludes to its performance at Court on New Year's Eve, 1584. However, the performers are identified as 'her Maiesties children and the children of Paules'. [Cited in G. K. Hunter, ed., *Campaspe* by John Lyly (Manchester and New York: Manchester University, 1991), p. 34.]) The Earl also performed (taking part 'in a Shrovetide device at Court in 1579') and wrote plays, Francis Meres speaking of him as one of 'the best for comedy amongst us' in his *Palladis Tamia* (1598). [Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, II, p. 100.] It is conceivable, therefore, that some of his plays were performed by the companies he patronised and possibly at one of his residences.

Likewise, William Stanley, the sixth Earl of Derby was renowned as a patron of Elizabethan drama and said to be an active playwright: 'On June 30, 1599, George Fenner, wrote from London to [...] Caldelli or Guisseppi Tusinga, at Venice, 'The Earl of Derby is busy penning comedies for the common players'. [Murray, *English Dramatic Companies*, II, pp. 293.] If the report is accurate, it is quite possible that his company would have performed some of his plays. The company would have had a number of playing spaces in which to experiment with their performance. As well as owning several country houses in Lancashire (Lathom, Knowsley and New Park), the Earl of Derby may have been involved in supporting a playhouse at Prescott.

William Percy was another noble known for his patronage of players and his exercise as a playwright. Several of his plays survive in manuscript (*Arabia Sitiens, Or a Dream of a Dry Year; The Cuckqueens and Cuckolds Errant; The Aphrodisial or Sea Feast; The Fairy Pastoral; Necromantes*). [Annals of English Drama, 975-1700, ed. by Alfred Harbage, revised by S. Schoenbaum (London: Methuen, 1964), pp. 80-1, pp. 82-3, pp. 86-7, p. 314.] A number of his works are believed to have been performed by the boys of Paul's at their private London theatre at the turn of the century. [For example, with the manuscript of *The Fairy Pastoral* he offers advice on adapting the play for simpler staging for the boys at St Paul's: 'Now if so be the Properties of any of These, that be outward, will not serve the turn by reason of concourse of the People on the stage. Then you may omit the sayd Properties which be outward and supplye their Places with their Nuncupations onely in Text Letters']. [E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), III (repr. 1951), p. 137.] Others may have been staged at private houses (e.g. *The Fairy Pastoral* may have been performed at Syon House, and *The Aphrodisial* at Essex House). [See Harbage, pp. 82-3, pp. 86-7.] A number of Elizabethan noble women are reputed to have written dramas, some of which have been preserved, including Elizabeth Cary's *Mariam, the Fair Queen of Jewry*.

Playing 'Gear'

The pragmatics of travelling must have limited the amount of costumes which professional players could carry with them on their provincial wanderings, but it seems that some provision was customary. The will made by actor Simon Jewell (possibly one of Pembroke's Men or the Queen's Men), shortly before his death in 1592, reveals that he 'was obliged to sell not only his "share for horses" [and] "waggen"', but for ' "apparrell newe bought"' (purchases probably intended for use on a forthcoming tour).⁷⁷

We find even more explicit evidence that touring companies conventionally employed costumes and props in the statements made following the affray at the Red Lion in Norwich during a performance by the Queen's Men on June 15, 1583. William Kylbye of Packthorpe, one of the witnesses, described how 'hee dyd see three of the players rvmne of the stage with there swordes in there handes'; while George Jackson referred to 'one of the players in his players apperrell with a players berd vppon his face with a sworde or a raper in his hand drawen'.⁷⁸ As well as using costumes, the Queen's Men clearly possessed (or had access to) a wardrobe which included beards and real weapons.

Another intriguing record offering a possible insight into the use of costumes and props by touring companies is that found in the Maidstone accounts of 1569-70, following a payment to the Queen's Men and for 'nayles [...] wch were had to the playe'. The payment is to 'Mr Nicholas Austen for Paynted clothes left at the playe'.⁷⁹ The payment could refer to painted cloths (possibly used as a scenic background), which would represent an interesting parallel with metropolitan staging, such cloths being an apparently common feature upon London stages. However, it could also be an allusion to painted clothes used as costumes by the players. In this case, it is rather surprising that they should have been left behind.⁸⁰ It also appears to have been customary to carry drums and trumpets on tour. In February 1600, Henslowe recorded a payment for a drum and two trumpets for the Lord Admiral's Men 'when to go into the country'.⁸¹

⁷⁷ George, 'Shakespeare and Pembroke's Men', p. 307.

⁷⁸ Cited in Galloway, 'Records of Early English Drama in the Provinces', p. 98 and p. 108.

⁷⁹ Dawson, p. 114.

⁸⁰ It could mean that the players (possibly the Queen's Men) accidentally left the items behind on departing the city, or that they were 'left over', having been provided for their performance by the town and therefore returned to the civic officials after the performance was over.

⁸¹ Cited in Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, II, p. 547.

Any other properties carried on tour would have needed to be relatively compact, if not simple. However, as a number of scholars have observed, many Elizabethan plays do not require specific sets or elaborate staging, and, therefore, would have been easily staged without the aid of multiple properties.

Playing Spaces and Permission to Perform

On arriving in a new town it was generally the custom for travelling companies to present themselves (and their warrant to travel as players) to the mayor or his equivalent to request licence to perform in the community.⁸² Indeed, troupes were theoretically obliged to seek such permission, as Gurr notes:

The licensing of plays for performance had been required by proclamations of as early as 1559, when licences were to be issued 'within any Citie or towne corporate, by the maior or other chiefe officers of the same, and within any shyre, by suche as shalbe lieutenautes for the Quenes Majestie in the same shyre, or by two of the Justices of peax inhabyting within that part of the shire where any shalbe played'.⁸³

Typically, the troupe would then perform a play before the mayor (and possibly the aldermen), often at the town hall, if the community possessed one.⁸⁴ In towns such as Gloucester, citizens were also welcome at the 'mayor's play', as Robert Willis recounts:

In the City of Gloucester, the manner is (as I think it is in other like corporations) that when Players of Enterludes come to towne, they first attend the Mayor, to enforme him what noble-mans servants they are, and so to get licence for their publike playing, and if the Mayor like the Actors or would shew respect to their Lord and Master, he appoints them to play their first play before himselfe, and the aldermen and common Counsell of the City; and that is called the Mayor's play, where every one that will comes in without money, the mayor giving the players a reward as hee thinks fit, to shew respect unto them.⁸⁵

⁸² In reality this practice may not have been observed in all regions or towns. Audrey Douglas and Peter Greenfield note how 'many troupes must have ignored the law when they came to Gloucester [...] since in 1580 the common council passed an ordinance which expressly required visiting companies to seek a licence from the mayor.' [Douglas and Greenfield, p. 252.]

Similarly, the warrants professional companies presented (from the mid-Elizabethan period onwards) were not always accepted, most often because their veracity or current validity was doubted. There are, for example, several stories of companies presenting forged or expired licences, as when Chester's mayor confiscated the warrant presented by Francis Coffyn and his company in 1602. The mayor made a note on the warrant: 'as I am Credbly enformd the lord dudly had long since discharged the sayd Coffen & licensed certayn others with words of reuocation of this warrant which was shewed vnto me I haue therfore taken the same from them giuinge them admonitions nether to play in this citty nor els where upon payne of punishment.' [Clopper, p. 178.]

⁸³ Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, pp. 51-2.

⁸⁴ In towns and villages without a civic hall such performances may have been staged in the local church or an inn. A number of performances in mayor's houses are also recorded.

In other towns, there might be more than one civic performance. In York, a regulation was passed in 1582 which ordered that players 'comying from hensforth to this cittie' should 'play but twise in the comon hall of this cyttie viz: once before the *Lord* Maior and aldermen &c. and thother before the *commons*'.⁸⁶

Having performed for a town's mayor and/ or received his licence to play, troupes had the opportunity to perform elsewhere in the locale, although in some cases, further productions were staged in town halls.⁸⁷ Sometimes their services were requested for private performances (e.g. in the town houses of local gentry people and merchants). Other performances might be staged in the inns or other drinking houses in which troupes customarily stayed.⁸⁸ Within such drinking houses, companies could take advantage of the large upper chambers many possessed. Inn-yards may have been occasionally used as well (as at the Red Lion in Norwich in 1583).

Another popular space for performances was the local church or cathedral, as many churchwardens' accounts reveal. In regions such as Devon the church was often the next choice of visiting troupes after the town hall, in communities large enough to possess a civic building.⁸⁹ Performances were also staged within churchyards, vicarages and church houses. At Gloucester in 1589-90, for example, the Queen's players 'played in the Colledge Churche yarde'; and at Sherbourne the Church house room was rented out to local and travelling companies, including the Queen's Men in 1597.⁹⁰

School houses and University colleges (in Cambridge and Oxford) were another potential venue for professional players, although performances in academic buildings were more often staged by the students themselves. It is also possible that professional companies used the

⁸⁵ Cited in Douglas and Greenfield, pp. 362-3.

⁸⁶ *REED: York*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, 2 vols (London: Manchester University, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1979), I, p. 399.

⁸⁷ The performance by Lady Elizabeth's players in Shrewsbury's Booth hall in 1613 which coincided with a break-in at the Exchequer was apparently a production subsequent to the 'mayor's play'. [Somerset, *REED: Shropshire*, II, p. 685.]

⁸⁸ Drinking houses may not have been popular as playing venues in all regions. There is, for instance, little evidence of playing in inns and alehouses in Devon. In this county the church was the preferred playing place of most professional playing companies, after the town hall. Inns and drinking houses are not always easy to identify either, as records often only name the host, rather than the public house.

⁸⁹ See Wasson in *REED: Devon*, p. xxv.

⁹⁰ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 311.
Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 272.

few specifically recorded provincial urban playhouses (e.g. the Wine Street playhouse in Bristol and the Prescot playhouse).⁹¹

Professional players did not confine their tours to towns and villages and urban venues, they also visited and performed occasionally at large country houses, as noted above. Indeed, professional players were sometimes specifically invited to visit and perform at provincial country houses. This might include playing at the country residence(s) of their patron for the entertainment of his/ her special guests (e.g. the Earl of Leicester's Men are believed to have performed a play at Kenilworth Castle in 1575 for the entertainment of Queen Elizabeth and her entourage during one of the evenings of her protracted visit to the Earl's Warwickshire seat that summer).⁹²

Similarly, players might be invited to perform at country houses as part of wedding celebrations or seasonal festivities. In 1595-6 Sir John Harrington arranged for a company of players from London (probably the Lord Chamberlain's Men) to visit his Rutland home, Burley-on-the-Hill to perform a play during the Christmas holidays for the entertainment of his many guests during this period.⁹³

As J. A. Sharpe observes, 'entertainment was [...] regarded as a means of impressing social equals and social inferiors'.⁹⁴ Likewise, generosity and the 'ability to consume conspicuously was thought to be one of the distinctive attributes of a great man or woman' in the early modern period.⁹⁵ Dramatic patronage was therefore one way of manifesting one's high status, and the country house provided the ideal arena for such display.

⁹¹ Pilkinton, p. xxxviii.

George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. xlv.

Johnston and Rogerson, I, pp. 530-1.

⁹² Leicester deployed his acting company to similarly impressive, political ends when he went to the Low Countries in 1585. On arriving upon the Continent he was involved in a series of politically motivated entertainments, celebrating his personal power and his proposed role in continental diplomacy. His acting troupe had a part to play. They accompanied him overseas and performed in various European towns under his name. As Sally-Beth MacLean notes, the attendance of the company abroad was 'unusual' and was undoubtedly a decision motivated by a desire 'to add to the courtly splendour of his entourage as it moved in progress to the Hague'. [Sally-Beth MacLean, 'The Politics of Patronage: Dramatic Records in Robert Dudley's Household Books', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 44 (1993), 175-182 (p. 180).]

⁹³ The play performed was Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. [Bate, p. 43.]

⁹⁴ Sharpe, p. 170.

⁹⁵ Sharpe, p. 171, p. 167.

Publicity

In order to maximise their audiences professional companies ritually “announced” their presence in a new town and publicized their urban performances by perambulating the main street(s), sounding their drum(s) and trumpets and advertising their intended performance.⁹⁶

A contemporary in Edinburgh described how a company of English players pursued this ritual when they visited the Scottish capital in 1599: ‘Upon Moonday, the 12th of November they gave warning by trumpets and drummes through the streets of Edinburgh, to all that pleased to come to the Blacke Friers’ wynd to see the acting of their comedeis’.⁹⁷ This practice probably accounts for Henslowe’s purchase of a drum and two trumpets for the Admiral’s Men ‘to go into the country’ in 1600.⁹⁸

In some instances companies also employed a form of advertisement used to promote playhouse productions in London. The players would put up notices or play-bills announcing a forthcoming performance. An interesting example of this practice is afforded by an incident which occurred in the summer of 1592 at Cambridge. It involved the Queen’s Men and threatened to bring the Cambridge authorities and Lord North into conflict. The University’s disapproval of professional players is well-known. From as early as 1568-9 the vice-chancellor had striven ‘to enforce an absolute prohibition of professional performances within five miles of the University’ and in 1575 a letter from the Privy Council granted the University ‘unusual powers to guarantee public order, to suppress distractions which might entice students from their studies, and to protect the whole community from the plague’ within a five mile radius of the town.⁹⁹ The University was thus empowered to suppress public plays. Acting on this authority, Robert Some (the vice-chancellor) led the local Justices of the Peace in refusing the Queen’s Men permission for a performance in neighbouring Chesterton in 1592; but the company proceeded with the production, as the Cambridge authorities complained:

⁹⁶ The process was much like that employed for announcing traditional local plays (such as Corpus Christi pageants), when the banns outlining the content of the shows and the date of their performance would be read in advance of the production (although the information provided by visiting players was probably less detailed).

⁹⁷ Cited in Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, II, p. 267.

Unable to announce forthcoming plays ‘after the epilogue of each performance’, as was apparently the practice in the London theatres, the travelling players had to rely on this audible entry to attract local attention. [Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, II, p. 547.]

⁹⁸ Cited in Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, II, p. 547.

⁹⁹ REED: *Cambridge*, ed. by Alan H. Nelson, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1989) II, p. 723.

At this time of Sturbridge faire [...] certaine lighte persons pretendinge them selues to be her Maiesties Plaiers, albeit the Vice Chancellor, by auctoritie of yor LL:ps [Lordships] said *Lettres*, vtterlie forbadd them to make shewe of their exercises with in this Vniu'sities precinctes, did notwithstanding take the boldnes not only heere to proclaime their Enterludes (by settinge vp of writinge about our College gates) but also actually at Chesterton to play the same.¹⁰⁰

The commencement of a performance appears to have been signalled by trumpeting, as in the metropolis.¹⁰¹ While troupes are unlikely to have publicized their performances at provincial country houses, the beginning of their private performances appears to have been marked in similar fashion.

Times of Performance

The timing of civic performances by professional troupes appears to have varied between towns and over the course of time. In the early part of Elizabeth I's reign plays were staged both in the afternoon and evening. For example, in York, in 1581 the Earl of Sussex's players were to perform in the Common Hall at 'two of the clocke'; while a payment for 'lynkes to the play' in 1568 at Newcastle-upon-Tyne points to an evening performance.¹⁰² With the turn of the century, some corporations began to place restrictions upon night performances. At Chester in 1615-6 plays were not only restricted in the 'Comon Hall', but no playing was to be allowed 'in anie other place within this citie or the Liberties therof in the night time or after vje of the clocke in the eveninge'.¹⁰³ In the same year the Hythe authorities ordered that there was to be no playing later than 8 p.m. in the winter and 9 p.m. in the summer.¹⁰⁴

In other towns evening performances persisted unchecked well into the seventeenth century. At Shrewsbury in 1613, for instance, Lady Elizabeth's players were giving an evening performance in the Booth hall during which the Exchequer was robbed.¹⁰⁵ Nonetheless, the introduction of restrictions by some corporations may have prompted professional companies

¹⁰⁰ Boas, p. 223.

¹⁰¹ This probably accounts for a reference to players sounding 'theyr trumpetes' in a charge against Richard Jackson for allowing an unlicensed performance in his house in Nottingham in 1603. [Coldewey, *REED: Nottinghamshire*, forthcoming.]

¹⁰² Sybil Rosenfeld, 'Dramatic Companies in the Provinces in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Theatre Notebook*, 8 (1953-4), 55-58 (p. 57).
REED: Newcastle, ed. by J. J. Anderson (London: Manchester University; Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1982), p. 53.

¹⁰³ Clopper, p. 293.

¹⁰⁴ Cited in Somerset, ' "How chances it they travel?"', p. 54.

¹⁰⁵ Cited in Somerset, ' "How chances it they travel?"', p. 54.

to seek licences of the kind carried by the Lady Elizabeth's Men when they visited Plymouth in 1618-19. It stated that they 'had the Kings hand for playing aswell by night as by day'.¹⁰⁶

The timing of professional performances in private country houses also varied, plays being staged during the afternoon and at night. Sometimes two plays would be performed in one day, occupying both periods. Such was the case on one occasion at Knowsley House (Lancashire) in 1589-90, when the 'quenes players played in the after none & my Lord off Essix at nyght'.¹⁰⁷

Length of Visits

What evidence there is suggests that the duration of troupes' urban visits varied. In larger towns (or towns able to draw large audiences) companies might spend a week or more performing. In 1588, the Queen Elizabeth's players stayed in Carlisle for at least ten days; and in 1610-11 the Queen Anne's players were authorised to 'play for one weeke' in Norwich 'so thay they play neither on the saboth day nor in the night nor more than one play a day'.¹⁰⁸

On other occasions troupes appear to have been happy to perform for one night only before proceeding to their next venue (e.g. the Lord Admiral's Men performed at Ipswich on 26th May 1586-7 and were performing in Aldeburgh on 28th May, suggesting that their visit to the former was brief).¹⁰⁹ The increasing regulation of playing by city authorities in the later sixteenth century extended in some instances to the length of any visiting company's stay in their town. In York in 1595, for instance, Lord Willoughby's players were only sanctioned to, 'play at ther host house or such other house or place within this citty as they can get for 3 or 4 days so it be not in the night tyme nor on the sabbath daie'.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 267.

¹⁰⁷ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 182.

¹⁰⁸ Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 136.

¹⁰⁹ John C. Coldewey, 'Playing Companies at Aldeburgh, 1566-1635', in *Malone Society: Collections IX* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1977), 16-23 (p. 16).

¹¹⁰ Rosenfeld, 'Dramatic Companies in the Provinces', p. 57.

In early modern Norwich troupes were regularly licensed to perform for a specified number of days only. On 4th December, 1596, for example, 'lycence & leave was graunted by this courte to the Lords whilloughby & Bewchampe there players to playe within this Cittie vntill wensdaye next behavinge them selves well & kepinge mete & convenient howers'. [Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 109.] When the Queen's Men visited the town in 1599-1600, they 'made petition to haue leaue to playe for iiij or dayes which was graunted so that they play not on the saboth daye'.

[Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 115.]

¹¹⁰ Hamilton, *REED: Leicestershire*, forthcoming.

The duration of travelling companies' visits to private country houses also varied. Visits lasting between one and four days are recorded, with the number of performances given varying between one and as many as five. In the Derby household books for 1589-90, a brief visit to Knowsley House is recorded: 'On Thurseday Sir Ihon Savadge mr dutton & the Qwiens players came, on frydaye the[y] departed'. When they had visited Lathom House (another Earl of Derby residence) in 1588-89, however, they had 'plaied ij severall nyghtes'.¹¹¹ Lord Derby's own players visited the Earl of Clifford's country house at Londesborough in 1589 and stayed longer again. Their visit extended for three days, in which time they played three times.¹¹²

Rewards

The money to be earned by professional travelling companies varied and, therefore, it is inappropriate to make generalisations. Civic and private rewards ranged from a few shillings to the four pounds paid to the Queen's Men at Ipswich in 1599 (although higher-status companies could frequently expect higher rewards). Municipal gifts, when made, might be greater on average than those given by individuals for private house performances, but they were not always more generous than private rewards. Certainly, wealthier patrons of drama at their country houses such as the Cliffords presented troupes with monetary gifts comparable with (and sometimes greater than) those given by the richer corporations (e.g. in 1595 Lord Willoughby's Men received thirty shillings for playing twice at Londesborough, and in 1610-11 both Lord Evers' players and the Earl of Derby's Men received three pounds for performing two plays).¹¹³

Corporate rewards for performances became less frequent in some towns in the Jacobean period. Other corporations introduced restrictions on the rewards given to players. In Leicester, for instance, it was agreed in 1582 that,

¹¹¹ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 182, p. 181.

¹¹² Wasson, 'Elizabethan and Jacobean Touring Companies', p. 53.

¹¹³ Palmer and Wasson, p. 8.

The rewards given by wealthier private patrons, including the Cliffords, were not always as generous (e.g. in 1595 the Queen's Men received only three shillings and fourpence when they visited Londesborough). Likewise, troupes were not guaranteed a monetary reward for performing at private houses. In the Cliffords' household accounts there are records of players visiting and receiving meals but not any payment (e.g. an unnamed troupe of twelve players received dinner only at Londesborough on January 1st, 1597-8) [Palmer and Wasson, p. 8]. In such instances it is possible that players were receiving payment in kind for performing, or were using some country houses simply as stopping points as they travelled and therefore did not perform.

frome henceforthe there shall not bee any ffees or Rewardes gevon by the Chamber of this Towne, nor anye of the xxiiii [...] nor xlviii [...] to be charged with anye paymentes ffor or towardes anye Bearewardes, Bearbaytinges, Players, Playes, enterludes or games, or anye of theym Except the Quenes Maiestes or the Lordes of the Privye Counsall nor that anye Players bee suffred to Playe att the Towne Hall [...] & then butt onlye before the mayor & his bretherne.¹¹⁴

On some occasions, civic rewards were given only as a supplement to a 'gathering' or audience collection. At Lyme Regis in 1592-3, for instance, the Earl of Worcester's players were given five shillings and four pence 'to furnish 4 s. 8 d. geuen', and 'the queenes plaiers the duttons' were given '12 s. 6 d. vnto 7 s. 6 d. gatherde'.¹¹⁵ In the later sixteenth century some towns shifted towards a system closer to that of the London theatres, charging spectators for entry to the playing space, often in place of any corporate contribution (e.g. the Leicester corporate records for 1590-1 note that ten shillings was received 'att the hall door' when the Queen's players performed).¹¹⁶ A number of early modern towns even introduced charges for the use of their civic hall as a theatrical venue (e.g. in 1616-17 players paid 'for the use of the town hall' in Bath).¹¹⁷

What money could be raised through gatherings at other public performances is unknown. Likewise, the manner in which companies divided their income is uncertain. Profits may have been shared equally, as is indicated in the portrait of impoverished players in *Ratsey's Ghost* (1606), where it is claimed that 'the very best' of provincial actors 'have sometimes beene content to go home with fiteene pence share apiece'.¹¹⁸

There is other evidence that suggests that the money was distributed in a manner akin to practices within the public playhouses of London, the 'sharers' (i.e. those men with some stake in the company's belongings) gaining a larger proportion of the profits than lesser players. Indeed, junior members of the company may have simply received a weekly wage.

¹¹⁴ Hamilton, *REED: Leicestershire*, forthcoming.

¹¹⁵ Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 217.

In Leicester the gathering was apparently a levy 'upon the members of the two councils known as the '24' and the '48', and orders are upon record limiting this habit to performances by the royal companies or the servants of privy councillors'. The latter makes clear the political dimension of dramatic patronage.

E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, I, p. 334.

¹¹⁶ Hamilton, *REED: Leicestershire*, forthcoming.

¹¹⁷ *REED: Somerset*, ed. by James Stokes (with Robert J. Alexander), 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1996), I, p. 26.

¹¹⁸ Cited in Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 50.

When Henslowe contracted William Kendall to work for him as a player he was 'promised "10s weekly in London and 5 in ye Cuntry".'¹¹⁹ This suggests that touring was generally a less economically profitable exercise than London playing.¹²⁰

As well as receiving monetary rewards professional troupes travelling the early modern regions of England could often expect to be entertained as guests by civic officials and private hosts. Payments to companies in civic records are regularly followed by entries recording expenses upon the players at a local drinking house. At Gloucester the reward to Lord Dudley's players in 1562 is accompanied by an entry for money 'spente vppon the seid players at the taverne'.¹²¹ Likewise, in 1569-70 money was spent upon 'a stope of sacke to the pleyers' at Dover.¹²² Occasionally, companies were offered food as well. At Dover in 1586-7 'x s. viij d.' was spent when the Queen's players visited 'for drinckinge to welcome them to towne and for their breakefaste at their departure'.¹²³

Sometimes town authorities even covered part of a company's expenses during their visit to their community. In 1567-8 the New Romney authorities paid 'iij s.' to 'mistris ffann [...] for the expences of the quenes maiesties playeres'. (Mistress Fan was perhaps the hostess of the inn or house where the players stayed in the town.)¹²⁴ Similarly, when the Queen's Men visited Fordwich in 1591-2 they were not only paid twenty shillings by the town, but money was spent upon 'theyr horsemete and beer'.¹²⁵

Visiting companies could expect to be well-treated during their stay at the house of a gentry or nobleman and his family as well, being provided with regular meals and a safe, comfortable place of rest. At the Clifford houses, for instance, Wasson has shown how the 'pantry accounts make clear that a troupe of players were given supper the day they arrived,

¹¹⁹ Cited in Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 50.

Henslowe's promise to pay Kendall suggests that he may have received some of the profits from provincial performances of the Lord Admiral's Men.

¹²⁰ William Ingram's calculations indicate how difficult it might have been to make profits when touring. He estimates that an average touring company could have faced travelling expenses of ten shillings a day (e.g. if staying at an inn each player would probably have had to pay at least '6 pence for an evening meal' and 'another 6 pence for a bed'). If performing every other day, such troupes would need to 'take in twenty shillings at each performance just to break even'. This was a sizable sum of money to have to raise. [William Ingram, 'The Costs of Touring', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 6 (1993), 7-62 (p. 59).]

¹²¹ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 299.

¹²² Gibson, *REED: East Kent*, forthcoming.

¹²³ Gibson, *REED: East Kent*, forthcoming.

¹²⁴ Gibson, *REED: East Kent*, forthcoming.

¹²⁵ Gibson, *REED: East Kent*, forthcoming.

breakfast and frequently dinner the next day before they had to leave'.¹²⁶ At Londesborough there are also payments indicating that players' animals were sometimes fed at the Lord's cost during their stay: for example, in 1598 a payment to players is followed by an 'Item more paid to thomas tome for ther horssmeayte 3 nyghtes and laiding'.¹²⁷

III

Local Plays and Amateur Companies¹²⁸

Patronised touring companies were not the only players in the provinces or the only manifestation of regional theatrical culture, as has been noted.¹²⁹ Many communities had their own rich dramatic traditions rooted in the ritual celebrations of annual folk and religious festivals.¹³⁰ Indeed, the parochial entertainments which continued to be popular during the

¹²⁶ Wasson, 'Elizabethan and Jacobean Touring Companies', p. 54.

¹²⁷ Wasson, 'Elizabethan and Jacobean Touring Companies', p. 53.

¹²⁸ *Local Troupes and Unlicensed Touring Companies- Amateur or Professional?*

Although for the purposes of this introduction the activities of those companies defined as town players (e.g. the 'players of Rochdale') have been treated under the section on local, amateur theatrical productions, deciding whether the troupes are to be defined as amateurs or professionals is difficult. Unlike the troupes patronised by nobles and royalty (and many groups of city waits), they generally appear to have been unliveried performers and were not usually issued with playing warrants. At the same time, they are distinct from those amateur groups assembled for occasional play performances, typically playing on a more regular and commercial basis. Indeed, many named town troupes toured regionally and were paid for their performances. Town companies were not the only unpatronised troupes touring the provinces, however. There were also itinerant troupes who travelled and performed on a fairly regular basis who were not licensed or affiliated to a town. The Simpson company that toured in Yorkshire in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period was one such troupe. In both cases the players' unusual status and career is perhaps best described, in Coldewey's words, as 'semi-professional'.

[John C. Coldewey, 'That Enterprising Property Player: Semi-Professional Drama in Sixteenth century England', *Theatre Notebook*, 31 (1977), 5-12 (p. 11).]

¹²⁹ The auspices for locally organised and amateur play productions were diverse. No doubt, in some instances, like-minded inhabitants simply joined together because of their shared interest in performance and their wish to participate in a local entertainment, but there could be more specific motives for playing. Within the flourishing grammar schools of the period and the University colleges, for instance, dramatic exercise was promoted as a tool of learning. In the wider community, a play might be prepared as part of the wedding celebrations of an important or popular local figure. This would seem to be the case at Plymouth in 1574-5, when an unnamed (probably local) company were paid for playing at 'mr ffordes when humphre ffonnes was married'. [Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 244.]

Plays were also occasionally prepared by locals for fund-raising purposes. In Tewkesbury a number of plays were staged alongside a church ale in 1600-1 'with the express purpose of helping to finance a new battlement on the church tower'. [Douglas and Greenfield, p. 256.] Those players who toured locally on a semi-professional basis were probably also attracted to playing as a means of making money, but for personal rather than communal ends. For some people, touring occasionally as a player may have provided a way of earning an extra or alternative income (e.g. in times when farm or craft work was in short supply).

¹³⁰ In Egton, for instance, the Simpsons and their fellow recusant players would have been familiar with the festival of the 'plough stot', staged on the first Monday after 12th Night. It occasionally included a dramatic interlude, as Young recounts in his *History of Whitby* [1816]: 'Sometimes the sword-dance is performed differently, a kind of farce, in which songs are introduced, being acted along with the dance. The principal characters in the farce are the King,

Elizabethan and Jacobean period often drew upon these older traditions. At the same time, in the University towns and in a number of those places possessing a grammar school, academic drama flourished (a branch of amateur theatre more usually based upon or influenced by classical plays and literature). Unlicensed touring troupes also travelled and performed regularly in some regions.

Many of the dramatic entertainments sponsored and performed by local amateurs (outside academic institutions) were 'pageants', rather than 'plays' and, therefore, will not be considered in this study.¹³¹ However, plays were occasionally performed as well and I shall be concentrating upon the conventions which governed these performances in the following survey.

Publicizing Local Plays

In keeping with medieval conventions the most frequent means of advertising parochial performances (especially large scale productions such as the Whitsun plays at Chester) involved the reading of 'banns'. Typically, the banns provided an outline of the content and action of the forthcoming plays and announced the time and place of the performances. In other cases companies of local players appear to have adopted practices similar to those of patronised travelling troupes, perambulating a town accompanied by drums and declaring the time, place and title of their intended performance. The amateur troupe led by Richard Clerke and Guido Dobbins who sought to perform unlicensed at the Crown in Cheltenham in 1611 employed this form of publicity. They were reported to have marched 'through the streets, banging on a drum and proclaiming that they would perform a play at the sign of the Crown'.¹³²

Players

Excluding the students who performed plays in schools and colleges, the social status of the participants in local and amateur drama in the early modern English provinces is largely undocumented, but it is likely that many were local artisans. The Simpson players who performed regularly in Yorkshire were mainly weavers and shoemakers by training, while

the *Miller*, the *Clown*, the *doctor*.' [Cited in Boddy, p. 117].

¹³¹ For example, the 'shows' staged for Elizabeth's entry into Coventry in 1566 by the Tanners, Drapers, Smiths and Weavers would be described as pageants, rather than plays. [Lancashire, p. 119.]

¹³² The bailiff 'citing fear of spreading plague [...] prohibited them from performing, and when they attempted to play anyway, they were arrested and fined by the manor court' [Douglas and Greenfield, p. 257.]

Peter Moone, the author of 'polemical verse pamphlets during Edward's reign' and the leader of a group of players who performed at Ipswich in 1560, was reputed to be a local 'artisan'.¹³³ Likewise, the rebellious players led by Richard Clerke and Guido Dobbins were described collectively as 'being artificers & laborers' by profession.¹³⁴ The amateurs involved in a performance of 'a play of henry the eight' in a Warrington alehouse in 1632 were also mainly artisans and labourers (including husbandmen, labourers, three websters, two smiths and a joiner).¹³⁵

As the example of the Simpsons' troupe demonstrates, some local troupes functioned on a semi-professional basis, touring local towns, villages, and households on a regular basis. More often amateur play productions in the provinces were staged by people who did not act regularly or for payment.

The Plays

The titles of the plays produced locally and by amateur companies in the provinces are not always recorded. Many appear to have been religious. This is, perhaps, not surprising, as locally-produced drama was often sponsored, or hosted, by the local church. However, the surviving allusions in early modern archives also testify to the occasional staging of classical plays: for example, at Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1600 there is a reference to the playing of 'the Comedie of Terence before mr Maior his brethren' (probably by local school boys).¹³⁶

The popularity of folk subjects is also evidenced. Records of preparations for, and performances of "Robin Hood" plays are especially common. 'Persons playing Robin Hood' are recorded at Bridgnorth in 1588, and a reference to 'Coats for Robin Hood, Little John, the vice, and others' in 1561 at Chudleigh, Devon might identify another performance.¹³⁷

¹³³ Whitfield White, p. 19.

¹³⁴ The involvement of such artisans in local theatre was not a phenomenon unique to early modern English culture. Earlier parochial dramas had drawn upon the skills of such amateurs. In medieval towns where play cycles were traditionally performed at Corpus Christi the pageants were often sponsored and staged by guilds of tradesmen.

¹³⁵ As George records, John Smith was 'described as both a husbandman and a webster', Thomas Houlbrocke as a webster, John Willie as a husbandman, William Hardman as a 'teldy' (possibly a tent-maker), John Cadwell as a webster, William Wildigge as a labourer and a blacksmith, Robert Wicke as a labourer and a smith, John Choner as a labourer, and Randal Rylance as a labourer and a joiner. [George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 337.]

¹³⁶ Anderson, p. 137.

¹³⁷ Lancashire, p. 88, p. 112.

As the latter example indicates, it is sometimes difficult to establish whether allusions to Robin Hood and his fellows in provincial records identify a performance of a play. Not all Robin Hood festivities involved dramatic productions. Sometimes Robin Hoods were elected to act only as money-gatherers for their church, touring surrounding villages in costume but not performing a

Local companies also occasionally performed plays that would have been familiar to London audiences, having been previously acted by professional troupes in the theatres of the capital. The repertory of the unlicensed Yorkshire acting company led by the Simpsons is known to have included at least three printed plays, originally written for and performed by professional London players (Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *Pericles*, and *The Three Shirleys*).¹³⁸ Similarly, it is likely that the Warrington amateurs who performed *Henry VIII* in Gregory Harrison's Warrington alehouse in 1632 used a printed play book (or books) as their prompt-copy (or copies).¹³⁹ It is quite possible that other semi-professional and amateur troupes made similar opportunistic use of London plays as prompt-books.

Amateur troupes may also have performed plays modelled upon dramas fashionable in the capital occasionally. The parish play performed by local amateurs at Methley (Yorkshire) in 1614 (and recorded in the Commonplace Book of local man, Richard Shann) may have been one such play. The play, described by Shann as 'a very fyne Historie or Stage play', was called *Canimore and Lionley*. There is no other known reference to the play, but, as John Wasson records, Shann's list of the performers and the parts they played suggests that the play was 'a knightly romance', in the tradition of the romance plays popular in London in the 1570s-80s, and again in the early seventeenth century:

In addition to the usual royal retinue of a duke, earls and knights, the cast includes two knight adventurers, a country man, a vice figure or fool called 'Invention the

play. In other instances, the entertainment offered by Hood and his fellows took the form of dancing. [Wiles, p. 31.] It is also unlikely that all the allusions to Robin Hood dramas represent performances of one play, although 'A Play of Robin Hood for May Games' (including two stories, 'Robin Hood and the Friar' and 'Robin Hood and the potter') was published in 1560 and may have been common to at least some of these performances. [Lancashire, p. 27.]

In a reversion of stereotypical expectations, the continuing popularity of these plays provincially may have influenced and inspired the composition of two Robin Hood plays for performance in London: *Robin Hood* [part 1] (written by Anthony Munday and Henry Chettle), and *Robin Hood* [part 2] (by Munday alone) appeared in Henslowe's list of new plays in 1597-8 and were probably staged at the Rose at this time. [Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, II, p. 166.]

¹³⁸ The troupe performed both Shakespeare plays at Sir John Yorke's house in Nidderdale in 1609-10 and stated that the performances were based upon the printed texts of the plays, authorised by the Master of the Revels. Presumably, they used printed copies of the plays as their prompt-books. [London, Public Record Office, Star Chamber, 8 19/10, mb. 30.]

¹³⁹ There were two well-known Henry VIII plays at this date: Shakespeare's, *All is True (Henry VIII)* (first published in the 1623 folio) and Samuel Rowley's *When You See Me, You Know Me* (1605). The men could have been performing either play. However, it is more likely that they were acting Rowley's play. Both plays had been reprinted in 1632, but Rowley's was more readily available and affordable. Rowley's play was first published as a quarto in 1605 'and reprinted in 1613, 1621, and 1632'. Shakespeare's play was only available in the more expensive Folio of the author's works, published in 1623 and 1632. [George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 337.]

paracite', a commoner and of course a ghost. Clearly we are not dealing with biblical history here or with any European history of which this author is aware. These are the kinds of characters of which fairy tales and dramatic romances are made, from *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes* of about 1570 to *The Tempest* of 1611.¹⁴⁰

Performance Spaces

Local performers were perhaps even more flexible in their choice of playing places, than patronised and licensed touring players. Like the national troupes, local groups of players are recorded performing in civic buildings (such as moot halls and town halls), churches, schools and colleges, inns and private houses. Local performances in outdoor spaces traditionally associated with performance or recreation were also common. (Professional productions in outdoor performance spaces are only occasionally recorded.) The village green at South Kyme is reputed to have been the location for an amateur performance of Tailbois Dymock's topical satire, *The Death of the Lord of Kyme* (1601), for example.¹⁴¹ The religious dramas at Chelmsford in 1562 were, likewise, staged outdoors. The sites used included the 'pightle' and the 'cornhill or market cross'.¹⁴² Similarly, Ian Lancashire describes how, in Lincoln, the play of Tobit was 'performed over two days in July 1564 in Broadgate Street'; and Thomas Ashton staged his famous religious plays in the 'quarry' at Shrewsbury.¹⁴³

Proof of the adaptability of many amateur provincial performers is found in the case of the unlicensed Cheltenham players cited above. Having been barred from performing at the Crown inn in 1611, the company led by Guido Dobbins, 'did endeavor to play' in another place, 'the house of one david Powell a victualler'. The change of venue was apparently of no concern.¹⁴⁴

Staging

The extant evidence relating to parochial Elizabethan performances varies in detail. Relatively full descriptions of some religious plays survive (such as the series of Biblical dramas staged in Chelmsford) and there are a number of eye-witness accounts of individual

¹⁴⁰ John M. Wasson, 'A Parish Play in the West Riding of Yorkshire', in *English Parish Drama*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Wim Hushen (Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996), 149-157 (p. 151, p. 154).

¹⁴¹ Harbage, pp. 78-9.

¹⁴² John C. Coldewey, 'The Digby Plays and the Chelmsford Records', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 18 (1975), 103-121 (p. 105).

¹⁴³ Lancashire, p. 171.

Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, III, p. 211.

¹⁴⁴ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 289.

performances. For many of the single performances by local players there is less information. By drawing upon fuller accounts and indirect evidence, some widespread practices can be identified.

Although locally-organized plays were typically amateur productions, many companies appear to have been as rigorous in their performance preparations as the professional troupes are believed to have been. Actors often rehearsed prior to playing and apparently memorised their parts.¹⁴⁵ At Donnington-on-Bain in 1563-5, Lancashire records how a 'parish agreement' was passed 'to fine players not keeping to their times', the context suggesting that the agreement referred to actors failing to attend rehearsals on time.¹⁴⁶ Such careful and extended preparation for performance would have been familiar to any people involved in the production of elaborate ecclesiastical dramas such as Corpus Christi plays.

Costuming and the use of props proves to be standard practice at a local level as well. References to apparel and staging furniture for local productions are common in municipal and ecclesiastical documents; and there is evidence of traffic in costumes, props and services between provincial communities.¹⁴⁷ At Sherborne in 1573-4 the local performers of the Corpus Christi play were even provided with '“backer” tents that served as tiring-houses'.¹⁴⁸ There are records of players' 'gear' being made out of old copes in 1577 in Bungay, Suffolk; and the 1562 biblical plays at Chelmsford included a vice equipped with 'coat, scalp, and dagger' and scenic properties, such as a 'painted pageant' and bushes for 'the “enclosing of the pighetell”'.¹⁴⁹

Where more detailed accounts survive, the evidence presents us with further proof of the effort invested in locally-organized plays and the ingenuity and skill amateur troupes could demonstrate. When Lincoln staged its 1564 play of 'olde thobye', they employed numerous complex properties, as Lancashire's catalogue demonstrates:

¹⁴⁵ Lancashire, p. 123.

¹⁴⁶ Lancashire, p. 123.

¹⁴⁷ St Mary's Church in Tewkesbury records a number of receipts for the loan of its players' costumes. In 1584-5 a payment is recorded from 'persons of hynchurche for the use of the plaiers apparrell at Christmas last', pointing to the often seasonal aspect of parochial dramatic activity and interaction as well. [Cited in Douglas and Greenfield, p. 339.] Likewise, the costumes employed in the Chelmsford plays are known to have been 'used for other plays and rented out to neighbouring towns and itinerant troupes'; and Burles, the 'property player' for Chelmsford, was also employed by the Maldon corporation when one of the Chelmsford plays was taken to the town that same summer. [Lancashire, p. 107.]

¹⁴⁸ Lancashire, p. 263.

¹⁴⁹ The latter must have been a considerable size, as ten men were required to carry it. [Lancashire, p. 85 and p. 90, p. 107.]

a hell mouth and nether 'chap' or jaws, a prison, the chamber of Sarah (Tobias's wife), a great idol with a club, a tomb, the cities of Nineveh, Jerusalem, and rages in Media, the King's palace at Lachish, and a firmament with a fiery cloud.¹⁵⁰

In some south-eastern towns we even have evidence that communities drafted in skilled individuals (for example, from London) to supervise the organisation and preparation of large-scale dramatic productions.¹⁵¹ These figures are often described as 'property players' in the contemporary records and their activities have prompted John C. Coldewey to speak of a tradition of 'semi-professional' drama in 'the counties near London'.¹⁵²

One such figure was involved in the production of the first two Chelmsford plays of 1562, as Coldewey records:

The plays began apparently, on Midsummer's Day and ran through the summer, ending sometime in August. The enterprise, though, had been under way for some four or five weeks before the plays started. Burles and a helper, his 'boye', were given roome and board during this time and while the first two plays were being staged [...] Burles' involvement in all the [...] activity was extensive. He supervised the scaffold building and was personally responsible for such things as the iron work on the hell stage. Other entries indicate that he had a hand in keeping the accounts, in designing scenery and ordering props and he was well paid for his pains: he received 53s. 4d. for 'serving' the first play and 42s. for the second.¹⁵³

That such a person was commissioned to supervise the play productions points to the seriousness with which the local community took the dramatic occasion. The records also reveal the amount of planning and preparation involved.

¹⁵⁰ Lancashire, p. 171.

¹⁵¹ In similar fashion, the university colleges sometimes turned to London writers and craftsmen for aid when preparing plays for special occasions, such as royal visits, as in 1583 Christ Church college, Oxford called upon graduate playwright, George Peele, to supervise the preparation of plays for the visit of Polish Prince, Alasco. [Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, I, p. 87.]

¹⁵² Coldewey, 'That Enterprising Property Player,' p. 5.

As Coldewey makes clear, the involvement of a 'property player' or 'devysor' is not known to have been customary in parochial drama throughout the country. To draw on London-based figures was less feasible for communities further from London. Indeed, the practice may have developed in some of London's surrounding communities simply because such help and expertise was easily accessible.

¹⁵³ Coldewey, 'That Enterprising Property Player', p. 7.

In similar fashion, when New Romney decided to produce a local play in 1560 not only was every able-bodied man to contribute to the play in some way but they, too, sought the services of a professional 'devysor'.¹⁵⁴ He, like Burles, was generously rewarded for his efforts, the accounts including a payment 'to Gover M'tyn or devysor for his seuyce at or playe iiij li'. As well as demonstrating the professional manner in which a number of provincial communities approached play production, records of such co-ordinated and extended preparations implicitly evidence staging practices which were far from crude.

IV

The perception and regulation of theatrical activity in the early modern English provinces

i- The Power of Playing in the Provinces

The popularity of, and the controversy surrounding, the theatres of the Elizabethan and Jacobean metropolis are well-known.¹⁵⁵ In tandem with the theoretical debates, London was witness to a long-running series of clashes between the Privy Council and the civic authorities regarding the authorisation and regulation of public playing in the City. The former repeatedly protected the right of licensed companies to perform (armed with the argument that it was "exercise" for their service as royal entertainers), while the City Fathers repeatedly sought to restrict performances and plays.¹⁵⁶ Whether these conditions and debates were duplicated in the provinces has less often been considered.

¹⁵⁴ Dawson, pp. 204- 5.

¹⁵⁵ Critics and defenders of playing alike assumed that theatre was a powerful cultural medium, with the capacity to enthrall and influence its audiences' thoughts and feelings. Those who condemned drama usually criticized it as a corrupting force or a form of deception. When the Lord Mayor and Aldermen complained to the Privy Council about the players in 1597, for example, they spoke of the plays as 'a speciall cause of corrupting... Youth, conteninge nothinge but unchaste matters... being so as that they impresse the very qualities & corruption of manners which they represent.' [Cited in Montrose, pp. 57-8.]

¹⁵⁶ Numerous regulations were passed insisting upon the toleration of licensed troupes only and the restriction of performances. For example, plays were not allowed after a specified hour in the evening, during service time, or upon the Sabbath, in the Jacobean period. A Privy Council Minute sent to the City Corporation as early as the 3rd December, 1581 accepts the restriction of Sabbath day Performances, when requesting that playing be allowed to resume in the city (after a plague induced period of restriction): 'the Lord Mayor of the Cittie should suffer and permitt them to use and exercise their trade of playing in and about the cittie as they have hertofore [been] accustomed upon the weeke dayes only, being holy dayes or other dayes, so as they doe forbear whole to playe on the Sabothe Days, either in the forenone or afternone, which to doe they are by this their Lordships' order expressly denyed and forbidden.' [Cited in Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 28.]

In the provinces the social, cultural and economic context of performance was different in a number of ways. Regional towns and villages were not as large as the capital and most communities did not possess a playhouse. There was also less dramatic activity than in London (generally, you could not see a play every day, as you might in London); and it is likely that people were less directly exposed to debates about the virtues or vices of drama. However, there are parallels between the responses of the metropolis and the provinces to the flourishing of dramatic activity in early modern England.

Several contemporary accounts of provincial performances testify to drama's perceived capacity to influence and move audiences. One well-known case is recounted by Thomas Heywood as occurring at 'Lin, in Norfolke', when 'the E. of Sussex's players acted the Old History of Friar Francis'.¹⁵⁷ Reportedly, a woman in the audience, compelled 'by a similar story in the play, cried out a confession that she had poisoned her husband for a lover's sake'.¹⁵⁸

Bearing in mind the anecdotal nature of the story and the fact that Heywood is writing a defence of 'playing', the truth of the tale cannot be accepted without question; but, that he relates it as a believable incident points to the general acceptance of drama's power to produce such an effect. Indeed, the tale is in keeping with a tradition of exemplary stories, demonstrating theatre's power to disclose vice and offer instruction. Notably, Hamlet hopes to use the performance of a travelling company to similar effect. Shakespeare may even have been thinking of the King's Lynn story, and others like it, when he included Hamlet's theatrical scheme for revealing Claudius' guilt.¹⁵⁹

Thomas Fuller recounts a similar case when discussing William Alabaster and a performance at Trinity College, Cambridge in his *Worthies of England* :

¹⁵⁷ Cited in Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), IV(repr. 1945), p. 253.

¹⁵⁸ Cited in Sybil Rosenfeld, 'Notes on St. George's Hall, King's Lynn', *Theatre Notebook*, 3 (1949), 24-37 (p. 24).

¹⁵⁹ In his *Defence of Poetry*, Sir Philip Sidney recalled Plutarch's story of the tyrant, Alexander being moved to tears by a tragedy, while he had 'without all pity [...] murdered infinite numbers, and some of his own blood'. [Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetry or the Defence of Poesy*, ed. by Geoffrey Shepherd (London: Nelson, 1965), p. 118.]

For similar reasons John Harington celebrated the performance of Thomas Legge's *Richard Tertius* at St John's (1578-9) in his foreword to *Orlando Furioso* (1591): 'to omit other famous Tragedies; That, that was playd at S. Iohns in Cambridge of Richard the 3. would moue (I think) Phalaris the tyrant, and terrifie all tyrannous minded men, from following their foolish ambitious humors, seeing how his ambitions made him kill his brother, his nephews, his wife beside infinite others, and last of all after a short and troublesome raigne, to end his miserable life and to haue his body harried after his death.' [Cited in Nelson, II, p. 847.]

witnesse his *Tragedy of Roxana* admirably acted in that Colledge, and so pathetically; that a Gentlewoman present thereat (Reader I had it from an Author whose credit it is sin with me to suspect) at the hearing of the last words thereof, *sequar, sequar* so hideously pronounced, fell distracted and never after fully recovered her senses.¹⁶⁰

Again, as the satirical aside to the 'reader' suggests, this account is anecdotal and of dubious veracity, but it is in keeping with the contemporary conception of theatre as a potentially emotive cultural medium.

Robert Willis' account of *The Cradle of Security* (an allegorical play which he saw while a boy at Gloucester's town hall) confirms drama's capacity to impress and instruct its early modern spectators. Describing the harsh "moral" conclusion of the play in which the play's protagonist was carried away by devils as a punishment for leading a decadent life, he speaks of the way this closing scene 'tooke such impression in me, that when I came towards mans estate, it was as fresh in my memory, as if I had seen it newly acted'.¹⁶¹

Equally, the court records of several regions provide evidence of the occasional use of drama and its persuasive powers subversively or provocatively. In Cambridge Thomas Mudde of Pembroke Hall was arrested and imprisoned for three days after attacking the Mayor in a comedy he had written in 1582-3.¹⁶² While, in 1566 there were complaints after players in the church at Hornchurch 'did playe and declare certayn things against the ministers'.¹⁶³

We also find plays being used as vehicles for parochial political and social commentary. The 1621-2 performance by local tenants in Kendal Castle proved controversial because of its alleged incorporation of satire against local landlords. In the subsequent Star Chamber case it was reported that the actors in the play at the Castle 'did therein make a representation of Hell and in the same did personate and acte manie Lordes of the Mannors of the said Countie' and represented them 'to bee in hell'.¹⁶⁴ The declared author of the provocative play, Jasper Garnett of 'Penrothe' denied that the players had 'represented or personated any

¹⁶⁰ *REED: Cambridge*, ed. by Alan H. Nelson, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1989), I, p. 339.

¹⁶¹ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 363.

¹⁶² Boas, p. 324.

¹⁶³ Lancashire, p. 156.

¹⁶⁴ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 188.

of the lordes of the Mannors' or that they were 'personated to be in Hell'. According to his deposition the play did satirise landlords, but landlords generally rather than particular local men:

what was then acted [...] was a repr[e]sentacion of ravens feeding of poore sheepe [...] in Hell which ravens were compared to [...] greedy landlordes and the sheepe to their poore tenants whoe oppressed them and fedd vpon their [...] Carcasses but the same was not intended more against any of the county of westm[o]rlande then against other counties and all in generall. ¹⁶⁵

However, as Douglas and Greenfield note, the adapted play's 'political commentary on those who sought to extinguish tenant right' was 'one of a series of incidents that marked tenant unrest in the barony of Kendal'.¹⁶⁶ Whether general or specific in aim the play's satirical interlude was clearly provocative and emotive locally and the fact that it was relevant to local affairs is unlikely to have been coincidental. That the local residents should have turned to drama to express their grievances is interesting. The perceived potency of theatre as a cultural medium and its frequent importance as a vehicle of individual and community expression in the period is once more suggested. ¹⁶⁷

Controversies were not confined to those plays which were deliberately subversive or performed without civic licence, however. Even civic authorities occasionally involved themselves in provocative theatre. In 1575-6 the Chester Mayor, John Savage, was called to London to face charges after the city's staging of its Whitsun Plays 'in contempt of' an 'Inhibition and ye primates letters from yorke and from ye Earle of Huntington'.¹⁶⁸ Savage was accused of instigating the performance of the 'popish plaies' in 'the [...] tyme he was

¹⁶⁵ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 196, p. 197.

¹⁶⁶ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 235.

¹⁶⁷ What is also intriguing about the Kendal performance is that some attempt was made to implement 'state' regulation. Permission for the performance was sought and the play was checked by two officials. Jasper Garnett testified that Sir Francis Duckett and his son petitioned Mr. Dawson to allow the play, pointing out that, 'Mr George Warde clerke of the peace both for the Countrie & towne of Kendall had seene & perused the *seid* play bookes & had libertie to correct [...] any thinge that was offensive in the *said* play bookes which [...] Mr Dawson acknowledged to be true [...] sayinge that neither mr warde [...] nor he coulde fynde any thing contayned in the *said* play bookes which were not to be allowed to be played.' [Douglas and Greenfield, p. 196.] When eventually sanctioning the performance Dawson had added the provision that 'there should be noe more added to the playe', a warning that the Master of the Revels issued numerous times in London. The controversy that arose following the performance rested precisely upon the question of whether or not material of a libellous nature had been added to the play in performance. [Douglas and Greenfield, p. 196.]

¹⁶⁸ Clopper, p. 109.

maior to the great abuse of the same office vnleafullie and by [...] synistre ways and meanes'.¹⁶⁹ He appealed to his council colleagues to defend him in this matter, by affirming that the decision to mount the plays was taken by the city corporation as a whole. This they duly did and the case appears to have been dropped. As well as testifying to the persistent taste for liturgical drama in many provincial communities, the Chester corporation's defence of Savage, and their readiness to brave ecclesiastic and metropolitan authorities in order to stage the plays, provides a fascinating demonstration of the privileged place theatre could occupy in the civic culture of a provincial town.

ii - Attitudes to, and Regulation of, Provincial Drama

As in the metropolis, public stage plays (by visitors and local performers) were generally popular, confirming the arguments of theatre historians, such as E. K. Chambers, who have spoken of the national taste for drama in the period. The frequent payments for repairs to doors and buildings at civic venues provide indirect evidence of the crowds of spectators that were sometimes attracted to indoor provincial performances.

At the same time, there were those in the provinces who expressed their anxiety about the disruption and expense associated with the presence of players in a community.¹⁷⁰ The fears of London's City Fathers about the safety of people congregating were also increasingly shared by their provincial peers as regional towns were sporadically hit by the same plague epidemics which afflicted the capital. Companies found themselves turned away or paid not to play (for example, in 1608-9 Lord Chandos' and Lord Berkeley's Men were paid not to play at Canterbury because of 'sicknes' in the city).¹⁷¹

However, the frequency of payments not to perform increased in the early decades of the seventeenth century, and troupes began to be paid not to play in some towns even when plague fears were not an issue. In Lyme Regis in 1621, a company of players was paid 'not to play heer', and in 1624-5 Lady Elizabeth's players were paid five shillings 'to depart the Towne without playing'. (In the past the town had rewarded acting companies for performing

¹⁶⁹ Clopper, p. 115.

¹⁷⁰ When the Chester corporation passed a new order in 1615-6, restricting plays within the Common Hall and regulating performances elsewhere in the city, they spoke of the 'many disorders which by reason of Plaies acted in the night time doe often times happen and fall out to the discredit of the government of this Citie and to the greate disturbance of quiet and well disposed People, [...] [and of] beinge further informed that mens *servantes* and apprentices neglectinge their *Masters* busines doe Resorte to Innehowses to beholde such Plaies and there manie times wastfullie spende thar *Masters* goodes.' [Clopper, pp. 292-3.]

¹⁷¹ Cited in Dawson, pp. 18-9.

on a relatively regular basis.)¹⁷² In Kingston-upon-Thames an even more intriguing payment for non-performance was made in 1624-5, ten shillings being 'given to the Kinges players because they should not play in the Towne Hall nor in the Towne for the space of ffyve yeares'.¹⁷³

The increasing frequency of such payments in Jacobean town accounts is usually interpreted as evidence of a growing distaste for theatre and players, fuelled in some towns by growing local Puritanism.¹⁷⁴ In some instances, corporate payments to companies not to perform do appear to have been prompted by anti-theatrical feeling. The payment to the King's Men in Kingston-upon-Thames in 1624-5 is implicitly anti-theatrical. Similarly, when the Barnstaple authorities paid a troupe of players 'to ridd the Towne of them' in 1629-30, the derisive language used implies that players were held in low regard and viewed as a nuisance by the town at this date.¹⁷⁵ This does not appear to have been true in all cases, however.

The motives of some of the corporations who paid troupes not to perform may have been pragmatic. There was widespread anxiety about the dangers of social unrest in the early seventeenth century and many towns became keen to avoid large social gatherings as potential occasions for disorder. In other cases, the decision to pay troupes not to play could have been political. As Mary Blackstone notes, 'the influence of a patron's prestige, and consequently his ability to promote players, began to seriously deteriorate outside of London' in the 1590s.¹⁷⁶ There was perhaps not the same impetus to accept troupes' services, if patrons and the patronage system were no longer perceived to be as powerful or as politically important. Some town authorities may even have been reacting against the outmoded network of influence and power represented by the system of royal and noble patronage when they chose not to allow patrons' players to perform. Refusing the players permission to perform

¹⁷² Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 223.

¹⁷³ *REED: Surrey*, ed. by Sally-Beth MacLean, forthcoming.

The special condition of the payment suggests that the town wished to suppress dramatic activity in the town in the near future. As a payment to prevent future visits by the King's Men specifically, it was not entirely successful. In 1626-7 the King's Men were paid another ten shillings by the Kingston authorities 'to forbear to play in the Towne'.

[MacLean, *REED: Surrey*, forthcoming.]

¹⁷⁴ As Margot Heinemann has made clear, Puritanism and anti-theatricalism were not synonymous, and the rise of Puritanism in early modern provincial towns was not always accompanied by moves to curtail dramatic activity. [Margot Heinemann, *Puritanism and Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1980), p. 18.]

¹⁷⁵ Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 58.

Barnstaple's authorities had begun to pay troupes not to perform in 1617-18.

[Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 49.]

¹⁷⁶ Mary Blackstone, 'Patrons and Elizabethan Dramatic Companies', *The Elizabethan Theatre*, X, ed. by C. E. McGee (Port Credit: Meany, 1988), 112-132 (p. 125).

was one way of demonstrating their own power, while by paying the players (for non-performance) they could still manifest their wealth and generosity.

Following in the footsteps of the London corporation, a growing number of municipal bodies also passed orders regulating urban performances. One of the earliest of these orders was passed in Canterbury in 1595, when the town ordered that,

there shall not any playes enterludes tragedies or comedies be played or players suffered to playe within this Cittie or liberties of the same on any Sabaothe day nor aboute twoe daies together at any tyme. And no players so to be suffered for any such twoe daies to be suffered to playe againe within the said Cittie or liberties thereof within twentie and eighte daies nexte after such tyme as they shall haue last played [...] And when soeuer any such players shall fortune to playe in any twoe dayes as before they shall not excede the hower of nyne of the clock in the nighte of any of those daies.¹⁷⁷

In similar fashion, the corporation at Hythe passed an order in 1615, regulating which companies could perform, and the number, regularity and times of performances permitted. The order stated that,

the Players of Enterludes of the kings maiestie, the Queene or Prince of this Realme comeinge to this Towne & shewing their Comissions vnto mr mayor or his deputy & the Iurates of this Towne for the tyme beinge be allowed to play two or three playes within this libertie at the most (and no more) to be played on the workeinge dayes & holydayes in the daye tyme or eveninge the same playes beinge fully ended before eight of the Clock at nyght in ye winter & in the Summer before nyne of the Clock at night, And no play in any wise to be played on ye Sabbath day [...] And that the players of noble men of this Realme comeinge to this Towne & shewing their Commission as aforesaid be allowed to playe one or two playes within ye libertie of this Towne & noe more at the most, to be played only on such dayes and at such tymes as is last before menconed & lymitted.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ James M. Gibson, 'Stuart players in Kent: Fact or Fiction?', *REED Newsletter*, 20:2 (1995), 1-12 (p. 7).

¹⁷⁸ Gibson, 'Stuart players', pp. 5-6.

The use of civic spaces by players was limited in a growing number of towns as well.¹⁷⁹ In Stratford-upon-Avon a rule was passed in 1602 stating that ‘no pleyes or enterlewds’ should be ‘playd in the [...] guild hall’, and any bailiff, alderman, or burghess who gave ‘leauē or licence thereunto’ was to ‘forfeyt for euerye offence’ ten shillings.¹⁸⁰ The papers of the York corporation provide an even more illuminating insight into the increasing exclusion of players from civic venues, passing a series of orders between the 1580s and 1590s regulating players and their performances. Initially, in 1582 it was ordered that ‘players of Interludes now come and comyng from henceforthe to this cittie shall play but twice in the comon hall of this cyttie viz once before the L. Maior and eldermen and th’other before the comons’. By 1592 it was considered that this, too, was unsatisfactory:

wheras the doores, lockes, keyes, wyndowes, bordes, benches and other buildings of the Comon Hall are greatlye impared and hurtt and diverse of the same broken, shakne, lowst and ryven up by people reparinge thither to see and heare plays. It is theirfore nowe agreed by thes presente that no players shalbe pmitted to playe anye manner of playes either in the same Common Hall or in St. Anthony’s Halle at any tyme or tymes hereafter.¹⁸¹

The passing of orders regulating dramatic activity (and performances in buildings such as town halls) is often cited as another manifestation of increasing prejudice against drama and players in the provinces. Again, in some cases, the introduction of regulatory orders evidently was prompted by a distaste for drama and a corporate desire to suppress theatrical activity.

The 1615 order at Hythe, cited above, was prefaced with a critical account of the troublesome and deceitful behaviour of players in the past, which is implicitly anti-theatrical:

divers Comon Players of Enterluds as well of the kings Maiestie as of the Queene Prince & nobles of this Realme have vsed to come to this Towne & shewinge their Comissions vnto mr mayor or his Deputie & and the Iurats have beene permitted to play within this Towne and lymitted to play but a certayne number of playes & those at convenyent tymes one the workinge dayes or holydayes & forbydden to meddle

¹⁷⁹ However, in many cities the exclusion of players from civic buildings was to be a Jacobean, rather than an Elizabethan measure (e.g. ‘Chester in 1615, Southampton in 1623, Worcester in 1627, closed their public buildings to performances’). [Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, I, p. 387].

¹⁸⁰ Stratford-upon-Avon, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Council Books of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon, B, Council Minutes, 1593-1628, BRU2: 2, p. 95.

¹⁸¹ Rosenfeld, ‘Dramatic Companies in the Provinces’, p. 57.

with any their playinge or pastyme one the Saboth daye wherewith the said Players have seemed to be satisfied and promised to performe such lymitacon & to observe the tymes as they were required and yet have practized the contrary wherein they haveing beene by the Mayor of this Towne & other the Officers forbydden & resisted have bearded & opposed them selves against the said mayor and Officers standinge vppon the validitie of their Comissions & proceeded in their playinge contrary to ye maiestrates expresse commandement.¹⁸²

Similarly, when the town authorities in Kingston-on-Hull prohibited local people from attending plays in 1599, they were openly dismissive and critical of plays and players:

hearetofore & yet their are resorte to the towne of Kingston vpon Hull divers Idle & lewde persons players, or setters oute of playes or enterludes within this towne, to wich playes many of thinhabitantes heare haue gon & ben present at, & spent their tymes & also their monie in hearinge such fryvolous & vayne exercises to the evil example of many.¹⁸³

In this case, it is notable that the corporation's negative view of theatre was not shared by all of the inhabitants of Kingston-upon-Hull. Many local people chose to go and see play performances, as the corporation admitted. Even if regulatory orders were prompted in some towns by anti-theatrical feeling, therefore, the prejudice against theatre may not have been widespread, but confined to members of the corporation and radical religious reformers.

The regulatory orders passed in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century only occasionally cite an intrinsic objection to plays and players as the reason for their introduction. Once more, the introduction of stricter controls upon dramatic activity appears to have been prompted in many cases by more general social and economic concerns. Controlling or limiting play performances was sometimes simply a way of curbing the amount of money spent by local people (and poorer inhabitants in particular) upon recreations, or of avoiding disorders and disruption to local working patterns (and thus the local economy). Such socio-economic and governmental concerns are expressed in the 1615 order passed in Chester.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Gibson, 'Stuart players', p. 5.

¹⁸³ Patricia Badir, 'Un-civil rites and playing sites: Some early modern entertainment records from Kingston-upon-Hull', *REED: Newsletter*, 20:1 (1995), 1-11 (p. 3).

¹⁸⁴ Clopper, pp. 292-3.

The impetus to regulate theatrical activity could be religious as well. For instance, a number of corporations introduced orders which prevented playing on Sundays, as part of a larger campaign to encourage observance of the Sabbath.¹⁸⁵ Such civic orders were in keeping with a Jacobean statute of 1604 which prohibited play performances (and several other recreational activities) upon Sundays.¹⁸⁶ Although the prohibition of playing on Sundays may have been fuelled by a more general, Puritan-inspired objection to theatre in some corporations, such as Canterbury, this was not the case in all towns. Sabbatarian regulations were not confined to drama and did not usually prevent or condemn playing at other times.

Notably, Elizabethan and Jacobean general regulatory orders do not usually attempt to prohibit play performances, but rather to control them and bring them more closely under civic supervision. In this respect the regulatory orders are evidence of the growing power of provincial corporations and of a growing desire to extend and reinforce regional corporate authority over all aspects of urban life in the early seventeenth century.¹⁸⁷

Those corporations passing orders restricting or prohibiting the use of civic buildings (such as town halls) for performances were not necessarily motivated by anti-theatrical or Puritan feeling either, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. When the corporation in York decided in 1592 to prevent future play performances in the Common Hall and St Anthony's Hall, the impetus appears to have been pragmatic. They wanted to preserve the halls from the damage caused in the past by the large crowds attracted to play performances.

Some Conclusions

Whether the apparent hardening of attitudes towards players in some provincial towns was prompted by concerns about local socio-economic and political concerns, or influenced by

¹⁸⁵ Sabbatarianism grew in strength in the early seventeenth century and there were campaigns for the prohibition of various secular, 'profane' activities upon Sundays in many provincial communities.

¹⁸⁶ In 1604 King James had ordered that there should be no bear-baiting, bull-baiting, plays or 'other like disordered or unlawful Exercises, or Pastimes' on the Sabbath. [W. P. Baker, 'The Observance of Sunday', in *Englishmen at Rest and Play: Some Phases of English Leisure, 1558-1714*, ed. by Reginald Lennard (Oxford: Clarendon, 1931), 81-144 (p. 100).]

The 1595 ordinance issued at Canterbury anticipated the Jacobean statutory prohibition of Sunday playing, and condemned performances on the Sabbath on overtly religious and moral grounds: 'to suffer players to playe on the Sabaothe daie is a prophaninge of the Sabaothe & a matter highley displeasinge to god [...] therefore [...] from hence fourthe [...] there shall not any playes enterludes tragedies or comedies be played or players suffered to play within this Cittie or liberties of the same on any Sabaothe day'. [Gibson, 'Stuart players', p. 7.]

¹⁸⁷ Hence, regulatory orders were passed regarding many aspects of urban life and behaviour in the early modern provinces (e.g. many towns passed orders controlling alehouses and limiting the amount of time which people could spend in drinking houses).

contemporary criticism of theatre, the introduction of stricter regulations and the growing frequency of payments not to perform, represented a move towards the more narrowly circumscribed world of later Stuart provincial theatre. It also contributed to a decline in play performances in some parts of early modern England.

As in London, however, the introduction of regulations did not prevent performances and the passing of regulatory orders cannot be automatically equated with their rigorous enforcement. In 1602, the Stratford-upon-Avon corporation passed an order restricting play performances. However, in 1612 the corporation were again complaining of the ‘inconueniencie of plaies’ in the town and agreed that the fine for breaking the earlier order should be increased to ten pounds. By implication, the 1602 order had not been enforced or observed consistently.¹⁸⁸

Even some of those city corporations seemingly less receptive to players continued to play host to visiting companies occasionally.¹⁸⁹ The prescriptions of municipal authorities in the provinces only appear to have restricted or suppressed dramatic activity in some Elizabethan and Jacobean regional communities. In many other early modern towns and villages, theatre continued to occupy a place in their cultural life, local play performances and/ or visits by touring players being recorded throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean period.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Council Minutes, B, BRU2: 2, p. 226.

¹⁸⁹ In Hythe, for instance, where an order regulating dramatic activity in various ways had been passed in 1615, the corporation continued to reward players on a regular basis. (e.g. in 1618-9 the town rewarded the Earl of Sussex’s players, Lady Elizabeth’s players, the King’s Men and the Queen’s players.) [Gibson, *REED: East Kent*, forthcoming.] Some of the payments may have been for non-performance, as the 1615 order had specified that troupes could be paid ten shillings to forbear from playing. However, there is only one payment between 1615 and 1625 which explicitly states that this occurred, suggesting that on the other occasions the players performed in the town. In 1616-7 thirty shillings was given to ‘Players of the Palsgraves cumpany for that they went oute of the Towne & dyd not play’. [Gibson, *REED: East Kent*, forthcoming.]

¹⁹⁰ In Congleton (Cheshire), visiting players were rewarded by the corporation in 1589-90, 1591, 1592, 1596, 1597, 1600-1, 1603, 1609, 1613, 1614, 1615-6, 1617, 1620-1, 1622 and 1623. [Coman, pp. 4-9.] The corporation continued to reward players in the 1630s as well (e.g. in 1635 Lord Derby’s players ‘whoe played in the Towne’ were given ten shillings). [Coman, p. 11.]

Likewise, in Faversham (Kent) the corporation rewarded several troupes annually throughout most of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period; and the Lady Elizabeth’s Players were rewarded at the dawn of the Caroline period. In 1624-5 they were paid for ‘beeinge heer when our kinge was proclaymed for the Play and Trumpettes’. [Gibson, *REED: East Kent*, forthcoming.]

CHAPTER TWO

Players in Provincial Civic Buildings in England, 1559-1625

Performances by visiting and local companies were occasionally sponsored in provincial communities by the local corporation (or ruling civic body). Such civic-sponsored productions might be staged within the residence of the local mayor (e.g. at Cambridge in 1587-8 'certaine players' were paid twenty shillings 'to plaie at Mr Maiors house'; and in Newcastle-upon-Tyne Lord Derby's players performed in 'Mr Maiore hous' in 1566); but the more usual venue for civic performances appears to have been the town hall (or its equivalent) (e.g. guild hall, Yeld hall, toll booth).¹

Town halls were not only used for civic-sponsored productions, however. Players occasionally used or hired civic halls for self-financed performances as well. At Bath (Somerset), in 1616-17 the 'Queenes players' paid the corporation three shillings and four pence for 'the vse of the Towne Hall'.² At Blandford Forum (Dorset) numerous acting troupes paid to play in 'the gyld hall' in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period.³ Those town halls which are explicitly identified as playing places (through performance records, contemporary allusions and regulatory orders) between 1559-1625 are listed in appendix i.

Our main evidence for play performances in civic buildings and of the popularity of town halls as playing venues is to be found in corporate records. As John Wasson notes, 'virtually every

¹ Frederick S. Boas, *University Drama in the Tudor Age* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1914), p. 222.
J. J. Anderson, ed., *REED: Newcastle-upon-Tyne* (London: Manchester University; Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1982), p. 45.

Many different terms were used to describe civic buildings in provincial communities, as Robert Tittler has observed. As well as 'town halls', names recorded include, 'tolsey', 'tollbooth', 'guildhall', 'yelde-hall', 'moot hall' and 'mote hall', 'booth hall', 'court hall' and 'chequer house'. [Robert Tittler, *Architecture and Power: The Town Hall and the English Urban Community, c 1500-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1991), p. 6.] In the following discussion the terms 'town hall' and 'civic hall' are used generically to specify those edifices 'characteristically regarded by contemporaries as the seat of whatever degree of autonomous civic administration a particular town may have enjoyed.' [Tittler, p. 9.]

² *REED: Somerset*, ed. by James Stokes (with Robert J. Alexander), 2 vols (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto, 1996), I, p. 26.

³ In 1595-6, for example, seven shillings and sixpence was received from 'plaiers that had plaied in the yeld hall this yere'. [*REED: Dorset and Cornwall*, ed. by Rosalind Conklin Hays and C. E. McGee, Sally L. Joyce and Evelyn S. Newlyn (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1999), p. 127.]

borough town for which we have records identifies the guildhall as the normal playing place if any site is mentioned at all'.⁴ More precisely,

Of thirty eight towns in England where we have some specific indication of playing-place (not a large number, but the consistent choice suggests a representative sample) the normal site was the church in sixteen cases and the guildhall in twenty-two.⁵

⁴ John Wasson, 'Professional Actors in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 3 (1984), 1-11 (p. 6).

Statistics compiled by the REED project, based upon the volumes of dramatic records published thus far by REED, afford similar proof of the popularity of civic halls as playing spaces. Of the 163 records of performances by patronised players (between 1559-1625) in which the playing space is identified, 107 appear to have been staged in the local guildhall or its equivalent. [Information supplied by Roger Starling from the REED Patronised Players data-base.]

⁵ Wasson, 'Professional Actors', p. 6.

Unfortunately, the municipal records of many towns have been imperfectly preserved. In some cases no records survive. Likewise, surviving documents are not always full or detailed in the information which they supply about the visits of players, and it is impossible to determine how many performances by locals and professionals went unrecorded because corporate money was not spent upon them. This applies to subsequent performances by companies initially rewarded by towns as well.

Play titles are rarely recorded and those plays that are cited are generally lost. *The Cradle of Security* which Robert Willis records as being performed at Gloucester's Booth Hall (between 1565-75) is otherwise unknown. [*REED: Cumberland, Westmorland and Gloucestershire*, ed. by Audrey Douglas and Peter Greenfield (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1986), p. 362.] Likewise, there is no other record of the play 'Barberous Terryne' [Barbarous Tyranny], performed at Ipswich in 1563. [E. K. Chambers, 'Players at Ipswich', *Malone Society: Collections*, II:iii (Oxford: Oxford University, 1931), p. 262.] A series of play titles is recorded in Bristol's civic records in 1575-9, but all appear to have been lost: *The Red Knight* (performed by the Lord Chamberlain's players, 1575-6), *Myngo* (performed by Leicester's Men, 1577-8), *What mischief worketh in the mynd of man* (performed by Lord Berkeley's players, 1577-8), *The Queen of Ethiopia* (performed by Lord Howard's players), *The Court of Comfort* (performed by Lord Sheffield's players), and *Quid Pro Quo* (performed by the Earl of Bath's Men). [*REED: Bristol*, ed. by Mark C. Pilkinton (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1997), p. 112, p. 115, p. 116, p. 117.]

The place of performance is not always identified either. At Coventry, for instance, the town annually rewarded a host of acting troupes throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean period, but no reference is made to the location of their play productions. There would have been a number of indoor venues available to the visiting companies (including inns such as the Angel where Lord Chandos' Men played without permission in 1600, and St Nicholas Hall, 'the meeting place for members of the parish of Holy Trinity (...) as well as the Corpus Christi guild'). [*REED: Coventry*, ed. by R. W. Ingram (London: Manchester University; Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1981), p. 356, p. 560.] However, the most likely venue for a civic-sponsored "mayor's play" would seem to have been St Mary's Hall, the 'functioning town hall'. [Tittler, p. 152.] Not only was the hall easily accessible, being centrally located, but a relatively large hall space was available (see plate 3). St Mary's was certainly the venue for other civic entertainments. [Ingram, p. 364.] Furthermore, if Halliwell-Phillips' transcriptions of the Smiths' Accounts are correct, the hall was used for theatrical purposes on other occasions: for example, in 1576 he records that the Smiths paid for 'sent marye hall to rehearse there' in preparation for their Corpus Christi show. [Ingram, p. 280.]

In many surviving corporate records the references to civic hall performances are sporadic. In Bristol's records the location of performances is generally unidentified but, when a place is noted, it is typically stated to have been the guildhall (as when the Earl of Leicester's Men were paid for performing in 1577-8). [Pilkinton, p. 115.] In such towns it is probable that the occasional

SOME DIAGRAMS
EXCLUDED ON
INSTRUCTION FROM
THE UNIVERSITY

The corporate ordinances which were introduced in increasing numbers, regulating the use of civic halls for dramatic performances, also provide indirect testimony to their popularity as playing venues.⁶ In Oxford an order was passed in 1579-80 restricting future play performances at the Guild hall, and indicating that performances had been mounted there in the past.⁷

That town halls were used and considered to be potential playing places also finds confirmation in contemporary court records. In a 1608 Star Chamber case against Matthew Chubb of Dorchester, it was alleged that he had attempted to persuade the town Bailiff and Magistrates to permit 'Lo: Barkleys servants' to 'play in the comon hall on the sabath day' during the troupe's visit to Dorchester 'in or about the moneth of Aprill'.⁸ The company did not actually perform at the hall, playing 'at a Comon Inne' instead.⁹ However, the incident reveals that the Common Hall was considered an attractive venue, and it was used for playing at a later date.¹⁰

allusions to the town hall identify the customary venue for civic-sponsored theatrical performances (including those whose place of production is otherwise unrecorded). Indeed, the fact that their town halls were routinely used for such performances could explain the few references to them: the location of dramatic productions would have been common knowledge and not necessarily worth recording in the accounts.

⁶ In some cases, regulatory orders are the only evidence for the use of a town's civic hall for dramatic productions. In Chester, for instance, the few records of professional players visiting the town are to be found in the archives of the Dean and Chapter. However, it is evident that players visited the city more frequently than records indicate, prompting the corporation to pass an order regulating play performances at the Common Hall and in the town in 1615-6.

[*REED: Chester*, ed. by Lawrence M. Clopper (London: Manchester University; Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1979), pp. 292-3.]

⁷ There are, in fact, two explicit references to performances at the hall between 1559-1625; one pre-dates the order, confirming that the Guild hall had been used for playing prior to 1579-80. In 1561-2 the Earl of Warwick's Men 'playd in the guyld hall' and received six shillings and eight pence from the Town Chamberlain; and in 1585-6 the Council 'agreed that the right honourable the Erle of Essex men shall playe onlie at this tyme, in the Guylde Hall courte of this Cytie, notwithstandinge an acte heretofore made to the Contrarie, the xviith of Februarie in the xxiith yeare of the quene's Majestie's raigne that nowe ys'.]

[Alexandra F. Johnston and Diana Wyatt, eds, *REED: Oxford City*, forthcoming.

Oxford Council Acts, 1583-1626, ed. by H. E. Salter (Oxford: Clarendon, 1928), p. 26.]

⁸ London, Public Record Office, Star Chamber, 8 94 / 17, mb. 17. Hereafter references to this case will be cited in the text.

⁹ Chubb claimed that he kept 'the key of the Towne hall' from the troupe to prevent them using the hall (PRO, STAC 8 94/ 17, mb. 2).

¹⁰ The main charge lodged against Matthew Chubb and his wife was that they had been involved in the composition and/ or circulation, and publicizing of 'three scandalous Lybells' which allegedly satirised Condytt (and a number of other local figures, including John White, the local minister) as Puritans (PRO, STAC 8 94/17, mb. 17). [As is recorded in the Star Chamber documents, the first libel begins 'with thease words Tall Sturdy Purytan Knave', the second with 'you Purytans all wheresoeuer you

dwelling', and the third begins 'To the Counterfeite Company and Park of Puritans' (PRO, STAC 8 94 / 17, mb. 17). The texts of the libels are appended to the Star Chamber documents relating to the case.] However, the case launched by John and Elizabeth Condytt against Chubb and his wife appears to have been part of a larger, on-going conflict between puritans and non-puritans in the town. As Underdown notes, the arrival of the formidable new rector, John White, in 1606 was quickly followed by an almost total Puritan ascendancy' in the town. [David Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1987), pp. 51-2.] Condytt was one of White's fellow religious reformers, while Chubb remained part of Dorchester's body of non-puritan officials and townspeople, and 'stood for an old conception of neighbourliness, of community harmony, of a social order held together by an interlocking network of mutual obligations' (Underdown, cited in Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 340). The Condytts objected to the satirical and mocking treatment of reformers like themselves in the verses.

Chubb was a goldsmith and reputedly 'Dorchester's wealthiest man' (Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 341). He was also an important figure locally. As early as 1583 he was actively involved in town business and the promotion of Dorchester's economic interests, thirteen shillings and fourpence being paid for 'the charges of Mr. Greene and Matthew Chubbe 5 days in Devon for the procuring of the assizes which were like to be removed'; and a further four pounds, ~~ten shillings~~ eight pence was paid to him 'for 9 days to Canterbury to the Lord Chief Baron for the obtaining thereof'. [Cited in A. Lindsey Clegg, *A History of Dorchester, Dorset* (London: The Research Publishing Company, 1972), p. 37.] He was also to hold several offices in the town's government. He acted as a Member of Parliament before his death in 1621, and was responsible (with his wife, Margaret) for founding an almshouse in the town in 1603. An effigy of Chubb, commemorating his contribution to local life and his success, apparently still stands in All Saints Church, Dorchester. [Clegg, p. 164, p. 59, p. 97, p. 59.] In the interrogatives which were prepared for those testifying on behalf of Chubb, attention was drawn to the significant role which he had played in local life. Question 4 asks 'hath not the defendant Mattheue Chubb alwayes beene reckoned a good townsman expert and ready in good gouernment of Town Affayres and more readie to punishe and repress [o]ffenders then to give waye or encouragement to them' (PRO, STAC 8 94/17, mb. 1).

At the time of the play performance alluded to in the Star Chamber case Chubb was one of the town's constables. One of the accusations against him was that he had failed in his duty as an officer of the law by encouraging Lord Berkeley's players to perform on the Sabbath contrary to the royal proclamation of May 1603 prohibiting Sunday play performances and after they had been denied licence to perform at that time by the town. (In the 1603 proclamation King James had commanded that 'no Bear-baiting, Bull-baiting, Interludes, Common Plays or other like disordered or unlawful Exercises or Pastimes be frequented, kept or used at any time hereafter upon the Sabbath day'.) [Cited in Margot Heinemann, *Puritanism and Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1980), p. 33.]

It would seem that locals such as Chubb found themselves increasingly at loggerheads with the town's puritan faction as both groups struggled for control of the local government. The acceptability of drama and other recreations upon the Sabbath appears to have been one of the subjects at issue between the two groups. Clearly, the puritans, led by White, were advocating the curbing of recreations upon Sundays. (Similar Sabbatarian campaigns advocating a stricter observance of the Sabbath were launched in many parts of the country at this time.) When the Lord Berkeley's Men visited Dorchester John White may have encouraged the bailiffs to refuse the players permission to perform (because it was the Sabbath) as one of the libels cited in the case, and allegedly 'aymed at' White, begins with an account of a confrontation between the 'Tall Sturdy Puritan knave' and some players: 'Tall Sturdy Puritan knaue for soe tearmed was thy name/ By playeres whom thou tearmest rogues' (PRO, STAC 8 94/17, mb. 12). The same text also includes a postscript in which the sturdy puritan is called upon to treat theatre more tolerantly: 'do not thou stand against stage plaiers [...]/ ffor yf thou doest thou shalt be calld knave and foole' (Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 180). Chubb reportedly attempted to persuade 'ye said Bayliffes and magistrate' that the players 'might be [...] permitted to play in the comon hall on the sabath day'. When his petition was unsuccessful he was then alleged to have sent 'word [to] ye sayd Bayliffs officers or magistrate or some of them', threatening that he would 'be even with them' (PRO, STAC 8 94 / 17, mb. 17). His reportedly rebellious behaviour and his apparent involvement in the players' later unlicensed Sabbath performance at a local inn were partly

That town halls were important playing venues in the provinces finds indirect proof in another contemporary source as well: the licences issued to royal and noble acting troupes, authorising them to tour the country. These licences routinely request that regional corporations allow the named companies the use of their town halls (or another public space). In 1609, Queen Anne's company were licensed to,

shewe and exercise publicly and openly to their beste commoditye, aswell within their nowe usuall houses called the Redd Bull in Clarkenwell and the Curtayne in Hallowell, as *alsoe within anye Towne halles, Mouthalles and other convenient places* within the libertye and freedome of any other Citty, universitye, Towne or Boroughe whatsoever within our Realmes and Domynions.

(own emphasis) ¹¹

Likewise, when the Earl of Derby sought permission for the Earl of Hertford's Men to perform in Chester in 1606-7 he added a postscript in which he asked the city corporation, 'to lett them haue the towne hall to playe in'. ¹²

Given the significance of civic buildings as regional playing venues, both the buildings and the performances mounted within them merit study. The following chapter therefore focuses upon the customs and staging practices associated with civic hall play productions, and begins by placing such performances in context.

responsible for the trouble in which Chubb found himself. Chubb denied having procured the use of the inn for the players but admitted that he 'did send or procure other company to bee att the same enterlude' (PRO, STAC 8 94 / 17, mb. 15).

Ultimately, the greater power of the Puritans and their control of Dorchester's corporation did allow them to curtail traditional festivities such as play performances upon the Sabbath.

[*The Casebook of Sir Francis Ashley JP, Recorder of Dorset 1614-35*, ed. by J. H. Bettey, Dorset Record Society, 7 (Dorchester: Dorset Record Society, 1981), p. 32.] Performances were not unknown, however. Two comedies were staged there by scholars of the town's Free School in 1623. [David Underdown, ed. 'William Whiteway of Dorchester: His Diary, 1618 to 1635', Dorset Record Society, 12 (Dorchester: Dorset Record Society, 1991), p. 55.]

¹¹ Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1970), p. 33.

¹² Clopper, p. 219.

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I

Players in Civic Buildings: The Context

Thanks to the detailed, pioneering research of Robert Tittler on early modern English town halls in *Architecture and Power: The Town Hall and the English Urban Community, c 1500-1640*, a large body of information relating to Elizabethan and Jacobean civic buildings is now readily available, and can be used to construct a contextualised account of dramatic performances in town halls. The following survey of Renaissance civic buildings in England's provinces makes extensive use of Tittler's findings.

Early Modern English Towns and Town Halls

Frequently equipped with a 'hall' chamber, provincial civic buildings lent themselves to use as performance spaces. This was particularly true in those towns where sizeable indoor venues were few. For many provincial communities the possession of a civic hall was a recent phenomenon, numerous regional corporations acquiring or building a town hall for the first time during the mid to later sixteenth century. Indeed, 'close to half the approximately six to seven hundred towns in the realm at this time appear to have built, substantially rebuilt, or purchased and converted a town hall and some of them more than one such edifice between 1500 and 1640.'¹³

The towns building or adapting civic halls were not always, or necessarily, economically prosperous.¹⁴ That towns were prepared to build halls during periods of recession testifies to the importance with which early modern corporations regarded the possession of a distinct civic space. It also indicates that the proliferation of halls in this period cannot be explained in purely economic terms. In many towns a growing civic consciousness was a far more important factor in the decision to build a town hall. This municipal consciousness was promoted by the increased political autonomy of many provincial communities (e.g. through the receipt of charters of

¹³ Tittler, p. 11.

The peak figure for town hall creation falls in the 1570s. In some areas, town hall construction proved infectious, neighbouring towns constructing or converting halls in imitation of each other. In Dorset, for instance, 'Poole, Shaftesbury, and the newly united borough of Weymouth and Melcombe Regis all built halls between 1565 and 1571'. [Tittler, p. 74.]

¹⁴ 'Stafford and Salisbury both seem to have been economically distressed when they built halls in the 1580s. The 1590s, by most accounts the most economically depressed decade of the century, still saw the construction of ten halls of which two, Appleby and Kendal, were in the particularly afflicted shire of Westmorland.' [Tittler, p. 69.]

incorporation).¹⁵ In some towns the creation of a civic hall explicitly followed their incorporation.¹⁶ According to Tittler,

Most town halls built or otherwise acquired in our period were intended to symbolise the attainment of civic authority from seigniorial hands and the exercise of that authority over the community. In both cases, the hall seems often to have been regarded not only as a place of government but also as a semiotic object [...]. That is to say, in anthropological terms, that the hall appears to have functioned as the 'tangible formulation' of the notion of civic authority.¹⁷

Town halls were important at a pragmatic, as well as a symbolic level, often serving a number of roles in regional urban life. The main functions, and the day-to-day usage, of town halls revolved around the business of civic government. As well as playing host to council meetings, the town hall was frequently the site for local and regional court sessions. In some towns the civic hall was intimately involved in local marketing as well, a role facilitated by the location of many civic buildings, 'on islands in the central market area of the town'. In Aldeburgh (Suffolk), for example, modern research has revealed that the ground floor 'of what is now (but was not originally) called the Moot Hall held six market stalls at one end'.¹⁸ Town halls might also incorporate a school room, prison cells, an armoury and storage rooms for communal grain reserves.

As one might expect, the town hall was usually the theatre for civic ceremonies and municipal festivities as well. Corporate banquets were mounted in town halls in celebration of various

¹⁵ Although charters of incorporation were granted to some towns as early as the mid fourteenth century, there was a sharp rise in the number of incorporations granted in the second half of the sixteenth century: 'Excluding mere confirmations, eight towns received incorporations in the last seven years under Henry VIII, twelve in the reign of Edward VI from 1547-1553, a striking twenty-four in the five and a half years of Mary's reign [...], an additional forty-six in the rest of the century under Elizabeth, and a further forty-seven to 1640'. [Tittler, p. 85.]

¹⁶ In Banbury, for instance, the new town hall was built after the town received its charter of incorporation in 1555. [Tittler, p. 93.] A similar sequence of civic development is not to be found in the evolution of all early modern English towns. Not all towns receiving charters in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period commissioned town halls. Sometimes existing buildings were available for use as guild halls. Likewise, halls were built, converted or extended in towns already incorporated.

¹⁷ Tittler, p. 93.

That the motives prompting towns to acquire halls were often symbolic as well as political and pragmatic is indicated by the kind of sites chosen. Many halls were located in (or near) the centre of the town, allowing them to be at the hub of community life literally as well as politically.

¹⁸ Tittler, p. 28, p. 32.

occasions, ranging from those of local municipal significance (such as mayoral elections and alderman elections), to ones of national importance. In Kendal the town records include numerous payments for dinners following the election of the aldermen, as in 1592-3 when 'x s iiij d' was paid 'for charges at ye diner at ye election & for wine & to ye waites'.¹⁹ While in Leicester a 'great feast was held at the new Leicester Guildhall in 1588, to celebrate the defeat of the Armada'.²⁰ Civic-sponsored feasts might be prepared in the local town hall in honour of visiting nobles or royalty, as well. When Lady Elizabeth (King James' daughter) was in Coventry in 1604, she was entertained with a banquet at St. Mary's Hall [see plate 3].²¹ In these cases, towns were typically seeking to impress, as well as to entertain and honour their guests. Entertaining those who exercised power locally and nationally was one means of securing their favour and thus their aid in forwarding matters of local import (such as petitions for extended corporate rights).²²

Many towns record performances by musicians or waits, as part of civic hall festivities.²³ Corporations occasionally hosted performances by tumblers and acrobats in their civic halls as well, as at Norwich, when 'xl s' was paid 'to the Quenes men when the Turke wente vpon Roppes at newhall' in 1589-90.²⁴ At Shrewsbury, the Booth hall was the location for more unusual forms of cultural display and entertainment, as Dr Taylor records in his history of the town. In 1572-3, 'there was brought to the boothe hall in Shrewsbury the head of a monstrous cauffe which had iiij Eyes two mowthes iiij Eares and but one fyrm and playne head which was calvyd within iiij myles of the sayd towne.'²⁵

¹⁹ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 174.

²⁰ Charles James Billson, *Medieval Leicester* (Leicester: Edward Backus, 1920), p. 67.

²¹ Ingram, p. 364.

²² In similar fashion, the Kendal corporation provided for 'Ale bread & Apples at A banket when ye Auditor & receiueres' were in the town in 1585-6. In this case the political reasons for entertaining their guests were mentioned explicitly: 'All yis was bistowid vpon ye Auditor & receiuer & for ther plesure both for yat ye Auditor was for my lord of warwick then & Also ye recieuer did help hus to our mony at my ld wardens ha[n]d at yat tyme'. [Douglas and Greenfield, p. 172.]

²³ In Cambridge in 1567-8, for example, 'masen', a local musician, was paid 'for plaienge at ye guilde hall', and in Chester the 'wheate men' were paid for their musical services having performed 'in the comen hall & in the alldermans' in 1582-3.

Alan H. Nelson, ed., *REED: Cambridge*, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1989), I, p. 253.

Clopper, p. 134.

²⁴ David Galloway, ed., *REED: Norwich* (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1984), p. 96.

²⁵ J. Alan B. Somerset, ed., *REED: Shropshire*, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1994), I, p. 219.

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As the location for such diverse community activities (including drama), town halls assumed an increasingly central place in the life of the towns where they existed. Indeed, in many provincial towns the town hall effectively replaced 'the guild chapel, the parish church, [...] [and] even the open market-place' as 'a focal point for social and civic life'.²⁶ When players staged their plays in civic buildings they were therefore symbolically performing at the heart of the community. At the same time, the fact that room was made for players and their plays, both literally and figuratively, within such important urban spaces is striking, indicating that in many provincial communities theatre was perceived to be culturally significant. It also suggests that there was popular interest in, and enthusiasm for, drama in many regional towns.

The Nature of Town Halls

Generalising about the period's town halls and their design is difficult. There is little information regarding those buildings no longer extant, and, while some halls were purpose-built, others were converted from older buildings (in which case their design was dictated by the existing structure). Nonetheless, some general comments upon typical styles and features of Elizabethan and Jacobean town halls can be offered.

Most early modern civic halls can be classified into two main types: ground-floor halls and first floor halls.²⁷ Those halls created through the conversion of medieval ecclesiastical or guild properties were usually stone constructions, while halls purpose-built during the mid-sixteenth century boom were usually at least partly timber-framed. Likewise, most of the halls erected in the earlier part of the century were simple in appearance and vernacular in style: their external stone or woodwork was generally unembellished by special decorations. Later corporations (e.g. at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries) were more ambitious in

²⁶ Tittler, pp. 152-3.

In some cases this replacement was literal as well as metaphorical, ecclesiastical and guild properties being converted for use as town halls. The guildhall at Leicester was converted from buildings originally belonging to the town's Corpus Christi Guild, for instance. [Billson, p. 55.]

²⁷ The classification of early modern town halls into these two main types derives from S. E. Rigold. [Rigold's work is cited in Tittler, p. 25.] There are a 'small number of halls' of an apparently 'hybrid type as well, where some market space was initially included in the ground floor of a more complex building with a meeting hall of some kind above, but where the upper storey was carried on much more than mere pillars'. [Tittler, pp. 31-2.] As Tittler acknowledges, there are also a few halls which 'fit into no type at all'. This category includes a number of the anomalous buildings cited above, 'converted from other uses'. [Tittler, p. 32.]

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the buildings (or renovations) which they commissioned. When Exeter's corporation decided to renovate their guild hall between 1592-4 the extension which was made at the front of the building was neo-classical in design and richly painted, at a cost of nearly £800 [see plate 4].²⁸

The Internal make-up of town halls

Most civic buildings incorporated a hall chamber (or large room). In some instances the town hall consisted of no more than this chamber. This space might be used for council meetings and court sessions. It is also the town hall space most frequently associated with the hosting of civic entertainments and dramatic performances. They varied greatly in size, but could be commodious in their dimensions. Probably the largest civic hall chamber in the period is that still to be found at St Andrew's Hall, Norwich. Following its dissolution during the Reformation, the church of the Blackfriars monastery became the property of the town. The nave which was converted into the 'New Hall' or 'Common Hall', measures approximately 125 by 70 feet, and the chancel, which became the chapel of the New Hall, measures 'about 100 x 33 feet'.²⁹ With these dimensions the Norwich Common Hall afforded playing spaces comparable in size with the halls found in the royal palaces.

²⁸ Tittler, p. 41, p. 42.

As the expense suggests, the resulting facade at Exeter was lavishly decorated, as well as stylistically innovative. Evidence of the original colourful grandeur of the facade was unearthed recently, as Howard recounts: 'the structure's recent cleaning has [...] revealed that the ground-floor columns were once flecked with grey veining on their alternating black and red colour fields in an oil-based medium to imitate marble, signifying the heraldic achievement of the city. Traces of blue on the frieze, yellow on the billet of the window frame, and green on the modillions of the cornice suggest that heraldry was almost certainly employed all over the facade'. [Maurice Howard, 'Classicism and Civic Architecture in Renaissance England', in *Albion's Classicism: The Visual Arts in Britain, 1550-1660*, ed. by Lucy Gent (New Haven and London: Yale University, 1995), 29-49 (p. 45).]

In choosing to borrow from classical designs the town mimicked metropolitan and elite fashions. Many Elizabethan nobles built houses incorporating classical designs, as when Thynne chose to have Longleat reclad in classical style in the 1570s. Likewise, in London the playhouse builders appear to have drawn upon classical ideas in the design and appearance of their theatres. De Witt's description of the Swan theatre emphasises its affinities with the theatres of antiquity, including its incorporation of classical stage pillars painted to resemble marble, as at Exeter guild hall. [Cited in *Shakespeare's Globe Rebuilt*, ed. by J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1997), p. 189.] The fashionable style of the new porch may have been intended to reflect Exeter's status as one of the province's important cultural centres as well. It is a title to which the town could already lay some claim. It had attracted 'touring performers continuously from 1370', for instance. [Sally-Beth MacLean, 'Touring Routes: "Provincial Wanderings" or Traditional Circuits?', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 5 (1993), 1-14 (p. 12).]

²⁹ Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. lxxxiv.

The halls in the royal palaces were generally large (e.g. Hampton Court, 106 feet x 40 feet, Windsor, 108 x 33 feet, Whitehall, 100 x 45 feet, Eltham, 100 x 36 feet, and Richmond, 100 x 40 feet). [E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), I, p. 15.]

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Most civic 'halls' were of more modest dimensions, but relatively large hall chambers were not unusual. At Shrewsbury, the Booth Hall contained a hall chamber measuring 63 feet in length and 25 1/2 feet in breadth. The hall at Leicester guildhall is of similar dimensions, measuring 63 feet x 20 feet [see plate 6].³⁰ Although these halls are smaller than those to be found in a number of the royal palaces, they are comparable in size with the hall playhouses of London (such as the Second Blackfriars theatre) and the dining halls of country houses such as Penshurst.³¹

The hall chambers to be found in medium-sized town halls are generally somewhat smaller again. The meeting hall in Bath's guildhall (Somerset) is estimated to have measured 24 x 45 feet, for example, and at Aldeburgh (Suffolk) the first-storey chamber was approximately 46 x 20 feet.³² However, the dimensions of these halls can, again, be compared with those of several country houses known to have been used for dramatic performances (e.g. at Gawthorpe Hall the 'Great Hall' measures 30 feet by 20 feet, 4 1/2 in., and at Smithills Hall, the hall measures c. 30 feet by 34 feet).³³ Hall chambers could also be small, however, as at Cambridge. The town's early modern guildhall had an upper hall measuring only 17 1/2 feet by 25 feet [see plate 15].³⁴

³⁰ Alan B. Somerset, ' "How chances it they travel?"': Provincial Touring, Playing Places, and the King's Men', *Shakespeare Survey*, 47 (1994), 45-60 (p. 55 and p. 59).

³¹ Gurr records the dimensions of the Blackfriars theatre as being 66 x 46 feet, and Penshurst's dining hall measures 62 x 49 feet.

Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 104.

Meg Twycross, 'The Theatricality of Medieval English Plays', *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. by Richard Beadle (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1994), p. 66.

³² Elizabeth Holland, 'The Earliest Bath Guildhall', *Bath History*, 2 (1988), 163-180 (p. 170). Tittler, p. 34.

³³ David George, 'Jacobean Actors and the Great Hall at Gawthorpe, Lancashire', *Theatre Notebook*, 37 (1983), 109-121 (p. 116).

The information about the size of the Great Hall at Smithills was kindly provided by Angela Thomas, Senior Keeper of Human History at Bolton Museum and Art Gallery, in a private communication (14th May, 1998).

³⁴ Alan H. Nelson, ed., *REED: Cambridge*, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1989), II, p. 724.

The guildhall at Stratford-upon-Avon is similarly compact in width, measuring approximately 18 1/2 feet wide. However, the ground-floor hall is much greater in length, consisting of five 14 feet bays [see plate 11]. In several cases the room available overhead would have been limited as well. This was particularly likely when the main 'hall' space was a first-floor chamber in a two storey building. At this point the occasional references to players damaging the ceiling during town hall performances become less mysterious (e.g. in 1592-3 seven pence was paid at Barnstaple 'for amendinge the seelynge in the Guildhall that the Enterlude playeres had broken downe there this yere').

[John M. Wasson, ed., *REED: Devon* (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1986), p. 46.] In an ordinary low-ceilinged room any exuberant stage business or use of special effects such as fireworks would risk impairing the roof of the chamber.

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In some town halls separate rooms were available for council gatherings, as at Bath's guildhall where there was a 'council chamber'; and in Shrewsbury and Stratford-upon-Avon the council had access to an 'agreeing' chamber. Similarly, in the more sophisticated civic hall complexes separate provision was often made for an armoury, prison cells, court rooms and reception rooms (such as mayor's parlours), and even sleeping accommodation.

It is not unusual to find references to kitchen areas in civic halls as well. Leicester's guildhall included a larderhouse and (possibly) a kitchen and spice-house.³⁵ Although the inclusion of such rooms 'may at first seem [...] incongruous, [...] when one considers the importance of feasts and banquets in urban ceremony' their 'role becomes obvious'.³⁶ A similar explanation can be offered for the occasional inclusion of a bar in town halls. In Gloucester, civic documents relating to the Booth hall record the presence of a tavern from as early as 1445. As Douglas and Greenfield note, this was probably the tavern, 'where the players were sometimes fêted after a performance'. [For example, in 1561-2 'iij s' was 'bestowed & spent vpon' the Queen's Men at the tavern.]³⁷

Internal decoration and furnishings in early modern English town halls

Whether players performed in a hall chamber or in another town hall room, they would usually have found the decoration simple. 'Ornamentation [...] was not common', and Elizabethan town halls were not necessarily painted or their windows glazed (e.g. in Bath references to glazing occur in 1581).³⁸ The furniture to be found in most sixteenth century town halls (and potentially available to players for use in performances) was similarly basic and limited. Chairs were rare being 'still very much "seats of honour", [...] associated with dignity, with formal occasions, with power'.³⁹ The most common form of seating recorded in the accounts of early Elizabethan Halls are moveable benches. Notably, when Robert Willis went to see the play, *The Cradle of Security*

³⁵ Billson, p. 65.

³⁶ Tittler, p. 38.

³⁷ The existence of the tavern is attested to by a rental of 1445. [Douglas and Greenfield, p. 424, p. 299.]

³⁸ Tittler, p. 45.
Holland, p. 174.

Plaster ceilings were another late innovation in a number of civic buildings, and the floors of town halls might be earthen rather than paved with stone, and 'strewn with mats or rushes as at Rye'.

[Holland, p. 172. Tittler, p. 120.]

³⁹ Tittler, p. 113.

Given their association with honour it is not surprising that provision of seating is often only mentioned in relation to higher ranking members of councils.

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in Gloucester Booth Hall, he talked of his father sitting 'upon one of the benches'.⁴⁰ In some town halls even benches (or forms) appear to have been available in limited numbers. When Lord Strange's Men played at Bristol's Yeld Hall in 1579-80, forms were borrowed from St George's Chapel.⁴¹ Tables are occasionally referred to in early sixteenth century corporate records as well, most often as magistrate's tables. Those cited are likely to have been trestle tables of the kind 'designed for the aristocratic household'. The table taken down in Bristol's Mayor's Court during the visit of the Earl of Leicester's Men in 1573 was probably of this variety.⁴²

The later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries witnessed a general improvement in the interior decoration and furnishing of many provincial town halls, corporations choosing to enhance the appearance and comfort of their buildings. Numerous payments occur for internal paintwork, for plastering ceilings and walls, and for wainscoting.⁴³ In 1583-4 Shrewsbury's Booth Hall underwent a number of renovations, including plasterwork and specially commissioned painted decoration. The Hall was 'selyd within overhedd and newe garnysched to saye where baylyffs and Aldermen sytt ...in bewtyfull and decent order'.⁴⁴

In richer corporations, hard and soft furnishings became more commonplace as well, many municipal bodies commissioning new mayoral chairs or paying for the improvement of existing furniture. In the Bath civic records of 1595 a payment occurs to 'the joyner for makinge of mr mayors seate in the yeldhall', and in Shrewsbury in 1583-4, 'the seate for the baylyffs [...] and Aldermen in the Guyle hall ... was waynskottid in more coomlyer and commendabler order than before'.⁴⁵ Earlier demountable magistrates' tables were also replaced in many towns by sturdier oak tables, sometimes incorporating ornate carved work. These tables were not meant to be

⁴⁰ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 363.

⁴¹ 'ij fowrnes' were borrowed from the Chapel and 'were broken' during their use at the play, 'by the disordre of the people'. [Pilkinton, p. 122.]

⁴² Pilkinton, p. 85.

⁴³ Shrewsbury paid for wainscoting in their Booth hall in 1577-8 and Marlborough paid for such work in their civic hall in 1632. [Tittler, pp. 114-5.]

⁴⁴ Tittler, pp. 114-5.

Glazed windows became commonplace and earthen floors were often replaced by paving. For example, in Stratford-upon-Avon a payment was made 'for glasinge the counsell chamber' in 1596 and Robert Hall had paved the chamber in 1566-7.

[Levi Fox, ed., *Minutes and Accounts of Stratford-upon-Avon Corporation, 1593-1598*, Dugdale Society, XXXV (Hertford: Stephen Austin, 1990), p. 79.

Levi Fox, *The Borough Town of Stratford-upon-Avon* (Norwich: Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon, 1953), p. 108.]

⁴⁵ Holland, p. 175.

Tittler, pp. 114-5.

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dismantled. The purchase of such substantial pieces of furniture was another way of displaying and celebrating corporate wealth and power and its stability. At the same time, it increased the material resources potentially available for, and in danger of being damaged by, town hall entertainments, such as play productions.⁴⁶

II

Dramatic Productions in Civic Halls

The Attractions of Playing in Town halls

Town hall performances held a number of attractions for playing companies. Not only were troupes provided with an indoor playing place (likely to be fitted with some seating and protected by municipal officers), but they were usually guaranteed some reward, either directly from the town authorities or through collections (gathered at the door or from the audience once inside). Often they could also expect to be offered hospitality and might be supplied with additional props, if they required them.⁴⁷ The fact that the civic hall had become the new centre of communal life in many towns was probably a further attraction. It guaranteed their performances publicity and local attention.

That civic halls were considered desirable playing venues finds some confirmation in the fact that companies were occasionally prepared to pay for their use in the early modern period. At Linton in Cambridgeshire, players paid to use the 'Towne house' several times in the Elizabethan period (1577, 1579, 1582, 1584 and 1590) [see plate 9].⁴⁸ At Blandford (Dorset) players paid to

⁴⁶ A similar desire to invest municipal authority with dignity and permanence is evident in the multiplication of heraldic ornaments and civic regalia. Many seventeenth century halls incorporated arms celebrating royal and civic power internally as well as externally (e.g. in Bath's guildhall 'the city arms were painted and gilded by Thomas Quilly, "under the deske before the Maiors Seate" in 1657). [Holland, p. 174.] At the same time, a growing number of halls invested money in ceremonial accessories such as decorative maces. The material enhancement of town halls was matched by an increasing concern with the security and protection of civic buildings and civic property in many towns (e.g. there are numerous payments for keys and the fitting of locks on external and internal doors from the end of the sixteenth century onwards.) In Stratford-upon-Avon, for instance, a payment was made to 'Lawrence abell for a kay for the yeld hall dore' in 1598. Similarly, when the Queen's Men visited Cambridge in 1605-6 the Mayor was able to lend them the key of the town hall, indicating that a lock had been fitted at the hall prior to this date.

[Fox, 'Minutes and Accounts', p. 120. Nelson, II, p. 725.]

⁴⁷ Several corporations routinely offered visiting companies some form of entertainment following, or prior to a civic performance (usually in the form of food and drink). Although this might be provided at a tavern, civic records sometimes specify that this ritual was performed within the town hall (e.g. in Coventry in 1608 a payment was made to 'the parlor' for 'a quarte of white wyne & halfe a quarter of sugar & for breade' for Lord Compton's players). [Ingram, p. 374.]

⁴⁸ REED: *Cambridgeshire*, ed. by Anne Brannen, forthcoming. Rather unusually the payments were

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use the guildhall in the Elizabethan and the Jacobean period (e.g. players hired the hall in 1595-6, 1609, 1616, and 1620-1).⁴⁹

What motivated civic bodies to reward and sanction players' performances in their town halls requires more explanation. During Queen Elizabeth's reign civic authorities were automatically involved in supervising dramatic activity within their locale. As representatives of the government every corporation (or its equivalent) was responsible for ensuring the enforcement of Royal Proclamations and statutory laws relating to plays and players, including the regulation of liturgical drama and the licensing of visiting players.⁵⁰ Theoretically, visiting acting companies were obliged to present themselves to the civic officers of any town which they entered to gain permission to perform. (See chapter one, p. 19 for a fuller discussion of this ritual.) Often, permission would be granted and followed by a "mayor's play" at the expense of the corporation. Although such plays might be staged in a local church or inn, the municipal hall provided the most appropriate arena for civic-sponsored drama and was the usual venue.

Town authorities were not obliged, and did not always, reward companies of players or command "mayor's plays". There were, however, several inducements to do so. The preliminary performance of a "mayor's play" within the town hall allowed the local authorities to monitor the material and behaviour of acting companies and the conduct of audiences. Likewise, it provided town authorities with an opportunity to 'place their own stamp upon' local entertainment, 'shaping the cultural tenor of urban society'.⁵¹

It was also often politic to reward professional companies patronised by royalty or nobles. As liveried servants of these people the actors symbolically represented their status and dignity. To treat the players with generosity was to demonstrate respect for their royal or noble patrons, and

made to the Linton churchwardens. As Brannen explains: 'By the time of these accounts, the churchwardens were managing the guildhall, or town house, rented from Pembroke College.' [Brannen, *REED: Cambridgeshire*, forthcoming.]

⁴⁹ Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 127.

Rosalind Conklin Hays, 'Dorset Church Houses and the Drama', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 31 (1992), 13-23 (p. 22).

⁵⁰ The 1559 proclamation stated that licences were to be issued for plays 'within any Citie or towne corporate, by the Maior or other chiefe officers of the same, and within any shyre, by suche as shalbe Lieutenautes for the Quenes Majestie in the same shyre, or by two of the Justices of peax inhabyting within that part of the shire where any shalbe played'. [Cited in Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 52.]

⁵¹ Tittler, p. 139.

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was, potentially, a way of procuring the patron's good favour.⁵² The payments made to visiting companies frequently related to the status of their patron, making it clear that corporations were acting politically in their patronage of drama. This was explicitly the case in Chester, where in 1596-7 a graduated scheme of rewarding troupes was outlined: 'it shalbe Lawfull for the Maior of this Citie for the tyme beinge to appoynt to be geuen in rewarde to her Maiesties players repayringe to this Citie twentie shillings and to any noblemens players sixe shillings eighte pence and not aboue'.⁵³

The seriousness with which professional companies were sometimes regarded as their patron's representatives is hinted at in a story related by Nashe in *Pierce Penilesse*. He describes how, at a provincial performance by the Queen's Men, 'the people began exceedingly to laugh, when Tarlton first peeped out his head', prompting a 'cholericke wise Iustice' to lay 'his staff about their pates [...] in that they, being but Farmers & poore countrey Hyndes, would presume to laugh at the Queenes men, and make no more account of her cloath in his presence.'⁵⁴ Although the tale is anecdotal and exaggerated, the royal colours probably did command a degree of automatic respect for the royal troupes when they were travelling, especially in the Elizabethan period. The livery of other important nobles is likely to have commanded respect in similar fashion in the late sixteenth century.

That municipal officers often held professional companies in some regard is also suggested by the fact that players were occasionally allowed the use of civic furniture for their performances and ready access to the hall space in preparation for playing. When the Queen's Men visited Leicester in 1605, they may have been allowed the use of a chair from the Mayor's parlour for their performance. A payment to 'Thomas heyricke for Lathes & neyles spent at the hawle at suche tyme as the Queenes playars were there' is followed by a payment for 'mendinge the Cheyre in the parler at the hall [...] which was broken by the playars'.⁵⁵

Civic authorities were able to display their wealth and power through their largesse as dramatic patrons, and there is evidence that some municipal bodies actively incorporated drama in their

⁵² In entertaining players town corporations were treating them as they would their noble patrons.

⁵³ Clopper, p. 184.

⁵⁴ Cited in E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), II (repr. 1961), p. 344.

⁵⁵ *REED: Leicestershire*, ed. by Alice B. Hamilton, forthcoming.

calendar of civic celebrations, inviting (or accepting) players for performances on special civic occasions.⁵⁶ At Bridgwater, for example, a payment was made in 1606-7 to 'the pleares at our seciones', and in Kendal in 1586 Lord Morley's players were paid for performing at a banquet 'when the Auditor and receiueres was ther at martinmas'.⁵⁷

City authorities may have been catering for the cultural needs of the community as well. The popularity of provincial performances is well-attested, and there is clear evidence of a thirst for drama in some early modern English communities.⁵⁸ This taste for drama and ritual had (perhaps) previously been satisfied by the ceremonies and plays of the liturgical calendar, but the Reformation had swept away most of these 'official sanctioned ritualistic activities'.⁵⁹ Secular culture was left to fill the vacuum.

Changing Attitudes: Regulating Drama in the Early Modern Town Hall

In the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, payments to players in civic records become less frequent and civic orders regulating the use of town halls by players (and payments for troupes not to perform) occur in increasing numbers, as noted above. [See appendix ii for a list of towns introducing orders regulating the use of their town halls by players.] It has usually been supposed that these two facts reflect a general change in attitudes towards plays and players in many provincial towns. Andrew Gurr, for instance, suggests that, 'the Puritanical hatred of playing was stronger and showing itself early outside London, where the Court had less sway'.⁶⁰

However, not all corporations regarded acting companies as an alien nuisance or sought to banish drama from their town halls. Occasional references to town hall performances are recorded in

⁵⁶ 'Mayor's plays' may have been occasions for corporate display, the mayor and aldermen attending in their civic regalia. A privileged seating area (e.g. the front benches or seats) may have been reserved for town officials in some places, further emphasising their elite status and corporate identity.

⁵⁷ REED: *Shropshire*, ed. by J. Alan B. Somerset (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1994), I, p. 59.

Douglas and Greenfield, p. 172.

⁵⁸ There are numerous records of damages to civic buildings caused by great presses of people, as at Bristol in 1575-6 when the Lord Chamberlain's Men played in the town hall. [Pilkinton, p. 112.] Meanwhile, in Kendal in 1585-6, the town authorities spoke of local demand for the revival of the town's Corpus Christi play: 'verry many & dyvers of the common Inhabitantes of this Incorporacion [...] doo covytt & earnestlye Crye for the havinge of Corpus Christi play, yearlye vsuallye to be had played and vsed heare as in former tymes without admyttinge or allowinge almost any occacion or necessitie for the stayinge therof in anye yeare'. [Douglas and Greenfield, p. 171.]

⁵⁹ Tittler, p. 132.

⁶⁰ Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), p. 38.

towns across the country even late in the Jacobean period.⁶¹ At the same time, the regulatory orders passed by provincial corporations varied in the extent and nature of the restrictions which they placed upon players' use of civic hall spaces.

Although some corporations had entirely prohibited the use of their town hall for dramatic performances by the early decades of the seventeenth century, in other cases acting troupes were restricted only as to the number of performances permitted within the local civic hall. An early regulation at York stated that 'players of Interludes now come and comyng from henceforth to this citie shall play but twise in the comon hall of this cyttie' (1582) [see plate 11].⁶²

Other towns simply confined players to day-time performances or to the use of certain parts of their civic building. The ordinance passed by the Worcester corporation in 1622 provides an example of both forms of restriction ordering,

that noe playes bee had or made in the vpper end of the Twone hall of this Cyttie nor Councell chamber vsed by anie players whatsoever, And that noe playes bee had or made in Yeald [i.e. 'guild' hall] by nyght tyme, And yf anie players bee admytted to play in the Yeald hall to be admytted to play in the lower end onelie vpon paine of xl s. to bee payd by Master Maior to the use of the Cyttie yf anie shalbee admytted.⁶³

In other places access to civic halls became dependent upon the status of one's patron. At Durham in 1608, the City ordered that 'the Maior for the time beinge shall not att anye time hereafter permitt or suffer anye plaiers whatsoever to plaie in the Toolebooth. Except his Maiesties plaiers or such other as the saide Maior and Aldermen shall in there wisdomes and discretions thinke fitt to allow'.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 39.

Bath guildhall was hired by Queen Anne's Men as late as 1616-17. [Stokes and Alexander, I, p. 26.]

⁶² Sybil Rosenfeld, 'Dramatic Companies in the Provinces in the Sixteenth and early Seventeenth Centuries', *Theatre Notebook*, 8 (1953-4), 55-8 (p. 56).

⁶³ David Klausner, ed., *REED: Herefordshire and Worcestershire* (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1990), pp. 453-4.

⁶⁴ *REED: Durham*, ed. by Tom Craik and John McKinnell, forthcoming.

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As noted in chapter one, the passing of orders regulating or inhibiting civic hall performances by players cannot be automatically equated with their observation (see page 45). Indeed, that regulations were not necessarily obeyed or enforced is demonstrated by the fact that some towns were obliged to issue subsequent orders in which the continuance of unauthorised performances is noted, as at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1612.⁶⁵

Moves to bar players from town halls were not always inspired or supported by the civic authorities either. Indeed, in at least one instance a town official promoted a town hall performance in the face of powerful opposition. In 1605-6 Queen Anne's Men were authorised to perform at the town hall in Cambridge by the Mayor. He even lent them the key to the hall to facilitate their preparations. However, in granting the company permission to perform in the town hall the mayor was acting contrary to the wishes of the University authorities and was transgressing a 1575 Privy Council ruling that professional players were not to be allowed within five miles of the University.⁶⁶

Even in towns where the corporation did seek to suppress town hall performances, they were not necessarily motivated by religious-inspired anti-theatricalism. When the Lord Berkeley's Men were denied permission to perform in Dorchester's town hall in 1608, the main objection to the intended performance appears to have been its proposed occurrence upon the Sabbath, Sunday play performances having been forbidden by statute in 1603.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ As noted in chapter 1, the Stratford-upon-Avon corporation ordered that there be 'no plays or enterlewdes playd in the chamber' or 'the guild hall' in 1602. [Stratford-upon-Avon, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Stratford-upon-Avon Council Minutes, B (1593-1628), BRU2 / 2 p. 95.] Yet, in 1612 the town authorities were again 'seriouslie' considering 'the inconuenience of plaies', and introduced a higher fine for breaking the original order, presumably in the hope that this would deter more people from trespassing against the ruling. [Shakespeare Birthplace Trust R O, BRU 2 / 2 (1593-1628), p. 226.] By implication, the order had not been strictly observed or enforced in the interim.

⁶⁶ Nelson, II, p. 723.

⁶⁷ In May 1603 King James had issued a royal proclamation prohibiting a number of recreations upon Sundays as inappropriate activities for the Sabbath. This included, but was not confined to, play performances, and was not intended to prevent play performances at other times. [Cited in Heinemann, p. 33.]

In Dorchester, the town officials were perhaps especially keen to enforce the 1603 order as the arrival of John White, 'a very active puritan, as rector for St. Peter's church in the town in 1606 had led to the growth of Puritanism and a stricter observance of the Sabbath.' [Bettey, p. iii.] White might have objected to drama at any time, but the Bailiffs and magistrate only appear to have denied the players permission to perform because their intended production would trespass upon the Sabbath.

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Not until the second decade of the seventeenth century is there any evidence that the Dorchester authorities assumed a more generally negative stance towards players and theatre. In 1615 the town's recorder, Sir Francis Ashley imprisoned Gilbert Reason, leader of the Prince's Men, after Reason had complained about being denied permission to perform. However, even in this instance (when the actions of Ashley and his officers probably were partly inspired by opposition to drama), Ashley's imprisonment of Reason appears to have been prompted more specifically by a concern to maintain order and to uphold civic dignity. He was arrested only after he accused the Chief Bailiff of being 'little better than A Traitor for refusing to look on the Commission', and daring Ashley 'to laye him by the heeles with other fowle language'.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, there were some play performances in the town (and in the civic hall) in the 1620s, as noted above (p. 48). In 1623 the town schoolmaster, Robert Cheek organised the performance of two comedies at the town hall for the new Bishop, as William Whiteway of Dorchester records in his diary: 'Dr Wright our new Bishop kept his visitacion here this yeare in September. Mr Cheeke acted two commedies at the sheere hall for his coming, by his schollers'.⁶⁹

The regulations passed by some corporations cite the disruption often attendant upon dramatic performances (such as disorderly crowd behaviour) and the expense surrounding performances as their grounds for objecting to, or calling for regulation of, play productions in the town hall. A combination of moral and socio-economic concerns appears to underpin the Chester civic order of 1615:

Consideringe likewise the many disorders *which* by reason of Plaies acted in the night time doe often times happen and fall out to the discredit of the government of this Citie and to the greate disturbance of quiet and well disposed People, and beinge further informed that mens *Servantes* and apprentices neglectinge their *Masters* busines doe Resorte to Innehowses to behold such Plaies and there many times wastfullie spende thar *Masters* goodes ffor avoidinge of all *which* inconveniences It is ordered that from hensforth noe Stage Plaiers upon anie pretence or color whatsoever shalbe admitted or licensed to set vp anye stage in the said Comon Hall or to acte anie

⁶⁸ Heinemann, p. 22.

Bettey, p. 10.

⁶⁹ Underdown, 'William Whiteway of Dorchester', p. 55.

tragedie or Commedie or anie other Plaie [...] in the night time or after vje of the Clocke in the eveninge.⁷⁰

Other towns' regulatory orders appear to have been primarily motivated by a desire to protect the fabric and furnishings of town halls from the damages frequently attendant upon mass gatherings such as plays.⁷¹ When the York Corporation excluded players from the Common Hall and St Anthony's Hall in 1592 they observed that, 'the doores, lockes, keyes, wyndowes, bordes, benches and other buildings of the Comon Hall are greatlye impared and hurtt and diverse of the same broken, shakne, lowst and ryven up by people reparinge thither to se[e] and heare plays' [see plate 11 for an engraving of the Common Hall].⁷²

A similar desire to protect civic property prompted the town authorities in Abingdon to bar players from their town hall in 1624:

Whereas the Mayor Bayliffes and Burgesses hath heretofore bene at great charg[es] in Repairing and amending the glasse windowes benches and pavement[es] of the guildhall by reason of playes there suffered to be plaied [...] it is this day ordered that no mayor of this Borough from hensfurthe shall geve any leave or license nor p[er]mytt] or suffre any playes whatsoeu[er] to play in the said Guildhall w[i]t[h]oute consent of Eight of the principal burgeses graunted at there meting in the counsell howse.⁷³

Likewise, in the 1606-7 order passed by Sudbury's authorities, it was stated that, 'the Mootehall of this towne of Sudburye hath byn broughte in muche ruyn and decaye by meanes of diuers disordered and vnrulie persons resortinge thither to playes of enterludes and other heretofore vsually suffered to be acted within the same Hall.'⁷⁴ The Mayor and aldermen decided that no

⁷⁰ Clopper, pp. 292-3.

⁷¹ In some towns measures were routinely taken to avoid the most common damages attendant upon players' performances. Norwich, Gloucester, and Bristol 'removed civic furnishings for the duration of theatrical performances, while in Cambridge players were required to remove the glass window panes of the Town Hall prior to performances.' [Tittler, p. 146.] Perhaps such measures were felt to be an insufficient protection against damage by those who chose to introduce orders restricting players' use of their town halls.

⁷² Rosenfeld, p. 57.

⁷³ *REED: Berkshire*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston, forthcoming.

⁷⁴ Wasson and Galloway, p. 198.

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more plays should be allowed in the hall as it had been 'nowe latelie repaired & bewtified by the nowe Maior as well at the greate chardges of the Corporacion of this towne as also at the proper chardges of the saide Maior.' ⁷⁵

As the Sudbury council make clear, their primary aim was to protect their civic building from damage, and the immediate impetus for the order in 1606-7 was the renovation and improvements 'latelie' made at the hall. As noted above, many provincial town halls underwent similar renovations as their corporations sought to create more impressive and comfortable halls. Having invested money on such enhancements it is not surprising that corporations such as Sudbury's should be anxious to avoid damage. Nonetheless, the fact that the Sudbury order begins by mentioning the 'ruyn and decaye' caused by 'diuers disordered and vnrulie people' resorting to the Moot hall, suggests that the council were as keen to exclude disorderly people from the improved hall as they were to avoid damage to the building. This was perhaps for symbolic as well as pragmatic reasons. Damage and disorders could be costly but they could also be seen to compromise the prestige of the civic space and the dignity of civic authority. ⁷⁶

These same concerns - the protection of civic property and the preservation of corporate dignity - can be traced in the more general shift towards the privatisation (and specialisation) of town hall spaces during the seventeenth century. The Chester council insisted upon a specialised interpretation of the functions of their civic space in the 1615 ordinance. They complained that allowing players to use the Common Hall had converted it 'into a stage for Plaiers and a Receptacle for idle persons', whereas it was 'appointed and ordained for Iudiciall hearinge and determininge of criminall offences and for the solempne meeting and concourse of this house'. ⁷⁷ In similar vein the Southampton corporation complained in 1622-3 that,

the grauntinge of leave to Stage players or players of Interludes, and the like, to Act and represent their Interludes playes and shewes in the townehall is very hurtfull troublesome and inconvenyent for that the table benches and fourmes their sett and placed for holdinge the Kinges Courtes are by those meanes broken and spoyled or at

⁷⁵ Wasson and Galloway, p. 198.

⁷⁶ The regulatory order passed by Worcester officials in 1622 which sought to confine players to the 'lower end' of the hall reflects a similar concern to protect civic property and the dignity of municipal authority. [Klausner, pp. 453-4.] The upper end of the hall was the probable location of the mayor's seat and the area most likely to be richly decorated and furnished.

⁷⁷ Clopper, pp. 292-3.

least wise soe disordered that the Mayor and Bayliffes and other officers of the said Courtes Comminge thither for the Administracion of Iustice (especially in the pipowder Courtes of the said Towne which are there to be holden Twice a day yf occasion soe require) cannot [so] sit there in such decent and Convenient order as becometh and dyuers other Inconvenyentes doe therevpon ensue.⁷⁸

In both towns, it seems, the players' use of the Civic hall was viewed with growing distaste and impatience as an encroachment upon (and disruption of) the hall's primary role as the theatre of local government. It perhaps reflects the fact that there was in both places an increasingly intimate association of the machinery of local government with the civic space.

In this context, it is not surprising to learn that players were not the only social group excluded from a number of early modern civic halls. The community at large and even junior civic officials were restricted in the access which they could gain to some civic buildings and certain town chambers (e.g. by 1563 in Oxford 'the more powerful members of the common council' met secretly in their own private chamber 'to prepare business for the council at large').⁷⁹

As a final point, it should be noted that the exclusion of players from town halls may have had more specific, pragmatic explanations occasionally. In Leicester, for example, the Earl of Essex's Men were rewarded with twenty shillings 'being not suffered to play at the hall' in 1585-6.

Although it is possible that the corporation did not wish them to perform, Billson offers an alternative explanation: 'They were prevented from [performing] probably by the alterations which were at that time being carried out' at the town hall.⁸⁰

Preparations for Town Hall Performances

The conventions surrounding town hall performances have already been discussed in chapter 1, a brief survey will, therefore, suffice here. After presenting themselves to local officials, visiting companies were sometimes granted permission to perform a civic-sponsored "mayor's play" in

⁷⁸ REED: *Hampshire*, ed. by Peter Greenfield and Jane Cowling, forthcoming.

⁷⁹ Tittler, p. 118.

⁸⁰ Billson, p. 67.

The Lord Chamberlain's and the Lord Admiral's Men, and the Queen's Men are recorded as receiving payments during the same accounting year, in addition to money gathered for their performances. Possibly they visited before the work at the hall was begun. [Hamilton, REED: *Leicestershire*, forthcoming.]

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the town hall. Subsequent productions were also permitted in the civic building in some cases.⁸¹ Performances were routinely advertised through public processions accompanied by drums and trumpets (and, occasionally, through the use of fliers). Plays were staged in the afternoon and evening and audiences could be socially-mixed (e.g. at Gloucester Robert Willis described how at the “mayor’s play”, ‘every one that will comes in without money’).⁸² Spectators were often accommodated upon benches, and stages were frequently erected for the performances. The use of lighting and props (some of which might be borrowed on-site) was, likewise, common. Some productions also included musical accompaniment, players either demonstrating their own musical skills or hiring specialist musicians.⁸³

The space

Most dramatic productions in town halls appear to have been staged in the hall chambers they typically included, as indicated above. The limited size of some town halls has prompted several scholars to argue that any room in them would have been restrictively small for players.⁸⁴ However, the provincial records indicate that this was not necessarily the case. In Cambridge, for instance, the town hall (and the hall chamber) in which Queen Anne’s Men were authorised to perform by the mayor in 1605-6 measured only 17 1/2 feet x 25 feet [see plate 15]. Evidently, the company did not find staging a play within the small upper room of the guild hall either impractical or impossible.⁸⁵

⁸¹ The performance by Lady Elizabeth’s Men in Shrewsbury Booth Hall in 1613 which coincided with the burglary of the Exchequer appears to have been a town hall performance subsequent to the ‘Mayor’s play’. [J. Alan B. Somerset, ed., *REED: Shropshire*, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1994), II, p. 685.]

⁸² Douglas and Greenfield, pp. 362-3.

⁸³ A play performance accompanied by music is alluded to in 1602-3 in the Gloucestershire Diocesan Consistory Court Deposition Book. Thomas spoke of having been ‘at a stage play in the Bothall’ at Gloucester twelve months earlier with John Wilmot. He described how Wilmot had said to him ‘that he could play better then any of those stage players, and offered to goe vppon the same stage and to take one of the same players instrumentes out of their handes to haue played vppon yt himself’. Thomas’ account suggests that the music was provided by the players themselves in this instance, and that they performed upon the stage. [Douglas and Greenfield, p. 314.]

⁸⁴ Whitfield White argues, for instance, that: ‘Anyone who has been to the famous surviving guildhall at Leicester will see that its very small auditorium of 20 feet in width by 62 feet in length offered rather cramped quarters for playing’. [Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation: Protestantism, Patronage, and Playing in Tudor England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993), p. 142.]

⁸⁵ Nelson, I, p. 403.

That playing companies were able to adapt their performances for small, as well as large, venues is also confirmed by the occasional allusions to performances in mayors’ houses (see p. 46). There is usually no information available about these private houses, but it is unlikely that any town house would include any very large chambers. At most they might contain a small hall or large upper

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The fact that play performances were occasionally performed in other rooms in civic buildings (such as parlours and council chambers) also suggests that players were able, and prepared, to adapt their performances for smaller spaces. Such chambers were usually more compact in their dimensions than 'halls'. When the Earl of Leicester's Men visited Bristol, for instance, in 1573-4, a payment was made for 'taking down the table in the mayers courte and setting yt vp agayne after the said players were gone', suggesting that they might have performed in the courtroom.⁸⁶

Preparing the Space

Less is known about the amount of time and access allowed companies (professional and amateur) for the preparation of town hall performances. As travelling troupes only visited some towns for a day or two the preparation time would have been limited. However, references to the erection of stages and the removal of glass windows suggest that some pre-performance access to the playing space was customary. At Cambridge in 1605-6, the Mayor lent the Queen Anne's players the key to the town hall in order to facilitate their preparations: 'Iohannes Duke et Thomas Greene bothe saye that master Maior did give them absolute authoritye to playe in the Towne Hall and did give order to some to buyld their stage and take downe the glasse windowes there and did also [...] give them the Key of the Towne Hall'.⁸⁷ In this instance, the troupe appear to have been assisted in their preparation of the space by locals, presumably paid by the corporation.

Payments for the preparation of the playing space can provide information about the subsequent staging of the plays. It is from the records of pre-performance preparations that we learn of players' use of stages and their possible borrowing of civic furniture for their plays. The performance by the Queen's Men in Nottingham in 1571-2 is known to have been produced on a stage as William Marshall was paid 'for bord[es] that wase borrowed for to make a skaffold to the hall when the quens maiestyes players dyd play'.⁸⁸

chamber of similar proportions to those chambers found in smaller town halls. Evidence that players could and did sometimes perform in small venues also emerges from the world of London playing. Trinity Hall of the Church of St Botolph-without-Aldersgate, which was hired by several companies of actors between 1556-68, measured only 35 feet by 15 feet. [W. F. Rothwell, 'Was there a typical Elizabethan stage?', *Shakespeare Survey*, 12 (1959), 15-21 (p. 16).]

⁸⁶ Pilkinton, p. 85.

⁸⁷ Nelson, I, p. 403.

⁸⁸ Transcribed in *REED: Nottinghamshire*, ed. by John C. Coldewey, forthcoming.

The location of the players' stage is not stated in most civic records, but evidence that the upper end of

A Survey of Town Hall Performances

Although Elizabethan and Jacobean civic accounts rarely preserve the titles of the plays performed in town halls, indirect evidence can provide clues to the identity of the dramas performed in some cases. A number of payments occur in the municipal accounts of Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1600, for example, which together shed an intriguing light upon a performance staged in the Merchant Court that year. The performance is striking because it is identified as a 'Comedie of Terence'. The reference occurs in a payment of compensation:

Paide for one new blew Coate to William Jackson seriant att Mace wche he had stolne foorthe of the marchantes courte att christofermmes play the Comidie of Terence before mr maior his brethren [...] & others 20 s. for a raper and a paire of silke imbroudered hangers, wche was loste att the same tyme: 13 s 4 d: for a duble silke slypers which was loste: 3s 4d. ⁸⁹

The performing company is not mentioned but the town paid a number of playing troupes for acting that year. Three professional troupes were rewarded. 'xl s' was given 'to the Earle of Lincolne & my Lorde Dudley his players', and twenty shillings was paid to the Earl of Huntingdon's players. ⁹⁰ Several payments were also made for expenses relating to performances by schoolboys. Two shillings and eight pence was paid 'for Candells to the courte to mr maior & mr Deane seeing the schoollers plaie'; six shillings and six pence was paid 'for Clothe to be Clothes to the boyes who plaide the Commodie'; and Thomas Turner received 'ij s' for six pounds of 'Candelles wche was deliuered vnto William Iackson when the boys [laste] playde in the Courte'. ⁹¹

Although the dating of Jackson's compensation (5th week, October) follows most closely upon the record of payment to the Earl of Huntingdon's players, an adult company is unlikely to have performed a Terentian comedy. Indeed, the professional adult troupes are not known to have

the hall was the usual playing place is found in the regulatory orders of towns such as Worcester (1622). [Klausner, pp. 453-4.]

⁸⁹ Anderson, p. 137.

⁹⁰ As the Earl of Lincoln's Men and Lord Dudley's Men were rewarded together it may have been a joint performance. [Anderson, p. 135, p. 136.]

⁹¹ Anderson, pp. 133-4.

performed any Terentian plays. The dramas of Terence and his fellow classical authors were confined to the world of academic drama (i.e. early modern England's schools and university colleges).⁹² At this point the references to Newcastle's schoolboy players become more intriguing. It is more likely that the 'schoolers' performed the comedy of Terence. Notably, Jackson (compensated for the loss of his coat at the performance) is explicitly linked with preparations for a performance by the boys in the same year. The payment to Thomas Turner states that he supplied Jackson with candles for the boys' last performance at the Merchant Court.

The boys appear to have performed at the Merchant Court on more than one occasion in 1600. There are two payments for candles and an allusion to a 'laste' performance, indicating that there had been prior productions. Consequently, the Terence play could have been the 'schoolers play' (recorded under accounts for the 4th week of January) or the comedy for which clothes were provided (1st week, April), or a separate performance, otherwise unrecorded. (The entry noting the compensation paid to Jackson speaks of the 'christofermmes' play, which could confirm that it was a separate performance.)⁹³

Whenever the play was staged, the records suggest that the Merchant Court performance would have taken place in the evening (lighted by candles) and would have been performed in costume. Whether the company followed classical conventions (and the practices of the London schoolboys) by using stage houses remains an intriguing but unanswerable question.⁹⁴ No payments of the kind occurring in the records of the London schools (e.g. for the construction of stage houses) occur in the Newcastle civic accounts. Although this could indicate that 'houses'

⁹² Grammar schools across the country included the study and performance of classical plays in their curriculum. As well as facilitating instruction in Latin such practice was considered 'a tail on the necessary dog of schooling in oratory'. [Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 70.] Study of classical authors was continued at the universities.

Many of the plays of Terence and Plautus were performed in the university colleges and schools. Terence's *Adelphi* and *Phormio* were performed at Trinity College, Cambridge, for example, in 1562-3, and the boys of Westminster School were performing *Miles Gloriosus* in the 1560s. [F. S. Boas, *University Drama in the Tudor Age* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1914), p. 387. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, II, p. 72.]

⁹³ 'christofermmes' may refer to 'Christopher-mass' (i.e. 25th July). This could mean that the Terentian comedy was performed by the schoolboys at the end of the academic year. [This information and suggestion was kindly provided by Dr Peter Davidson.]

⁹⁴ In the 1580-1 records for Westminster school, payments were made for 'making of the houses for the first plaie in the haull' and for 'ii houses for the second playe in the haull'. [Richard Southern, 'The "Houses" of the Westminster Play', *Theatre Notebook*, 3 (1948-9), 46-52 (p. 48).]

were not used, it might mean that the school provided its own stage furniture and props, or that simpler staging arrangements were adopted.

The performance remains especially interesting as evidence that classical play production outside classrooms was not unknown in the provinces. It is also fascinating to find the Newcastle civic authorities assuming a role akin to that of Queen Elizabeth in becoming patrons of academic school-boy drama.

The evidence of company repertories

In the case of the London based professional companies, records of the plays which they performed in the metropolis and at court prior to a tour are likely to offer a guide to their subsequent touring repertory and thus indirect evidence for the plays performed in the town halls which they visited.⁹⁵ In the case of at least one company more substantial information about their touring repertory in one year is available.

⁹⁵ Indirect confirmation that the plays taken on tour by professional companies were typically those already tried and tested in London is supplied by Henslowe's *Diary*, as Knutson notes. 'On 27 October 1593 the Admiral's Men returned to the Rose after having closed the previous July (on the 18th). They opened the Fall season with a repertory of old plays, both continuations and revivals of very recent productions. They did not introduce a new play until 4 December. But for the next two months and thereafter, they introduced a new play (or a play new to them) nearly every week. These entries (in the *Diary*) imply that a company alternating frequently between London and provincial performances might keep a number of old plays in production, both for the tour itself and as a filler in the London schedule while the players rehearsed new material.' [Roslyn Lander Knutson, *The Repertory of Shakespeare's Company, 1594-1613* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas, 1991), p. 106.]

Drawing upon the evidence of company repertories one can hypothesise about specific town hall performances, such as that staged by Lady Elizabeth's Men at Shrewsbury Booth Hall on 27 November, 1613. In this instance the location of the performance is known from the statements of locals concerning the burglary of the Exchequer which occurred on the same night.

The Revels office records for 1613 show that the company performed twice at Court in the first part of the year. On 25 February they performed *The Dutch Courtesan* before Lady Elizabeth and the Elector Palatine, and on 1 March they staged *Raymond, Duke of Lyons* before the same audience. The company staged *The Dutch Courtesan* again at court on 12 December. [Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 412.] The pre-1613 records of the company's court appearances name one other play, *The Proud Maid's Tragedy*. When the company went on tour that year it is likely that all three texts were included in their repertory and, therefore, available for performance in Shrewsbury in November. [The fact that the company were able to stage *The Dutch Courtesan* in early December (only a couple of weeks after the Shrewsbury performance) also suggests that they had kept this play, at least, in production.]

Thomas Middleton's, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* is another candidate for inclusion in the touring repertory, as the title-page of the first printed edition suggests that the company were performing it before 1613. The title-page announces that it was performed at the Swan playhouse by the company. As the company was not formed until 1611 and 'most probably left the Bankside by the end of 1613', the play is assumed to pre-date 1613. [Alan Brissenden, ed., *Thomas Middleton's, A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (London: Ernest Benn, 1968), p. xiii.]

The career of the 1591-3 Earl of Pembroke's players was, as Gurr notes, 'short-lived yet outstanding'.⁹⁶ The company patronised by the Earl (who was also Lord President of the Council of the Marches) became 'strikingly prominent strikingly quickly in London and at Court'. In their first season they were one of only two companies selected to perform at Court and, 'almost matched Strange's [...] with two performances' to their three.⁹⁷ However, the prolonged closure of the theatres from June 1592 obliged the company to commence a period of provincial touring that was to terminate in bankruptcy in 1593.⁹⁸

After this collapse the company are not heard of again in London until 1597 when Francis Langley brought a Pembroke's troupe to the Swan theatre.⁹⁹ The company's bankruptcy and return to London was shortly followed by the appearance of several Pembroke's plays on the bookmarket. Four plays were printed as quartos between 1593-5 which the company had performed (according to the title-pages): *Edward II*, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Taming of a Shrew* and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke Of York. The Contention of the Houses of York and*

Whichever play was performed, the space available would have been relatively large, as antiquarian Thomas Phillips reveals in his description of the Booth Hall (c. 1760s or 1770s). He spoke of the Hall as 'an old, low, timber building, consisting of a large room 63 feet in length, and 25 1/2 feet in breadth. [...] It is commodious, but in no respect elegant'. [Somerset, *REED: Shropshire*, II, p. 385.] Phillips also describes a large room adjoining the hall, 'commonly called the Green Room, but more properly the Agreeing Room, or Chamber of Concord'. This could have been used for the performance, but the main hall seems the more likely venue. It was larger and simpler in its decoration and could have accommodated a greater audience with less danger of expensive damage occurring. The Chamber of Concord might have afforded the actors a theatrical 'green room', however. [Somerset, *REED: Shropshire*, II, p. 385.] In its dimensions the hall would not have differed greatly from the Whitefriars theatre possibly used by Lady Elizabeth's Men in 1614. [Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 399.] The auditorium of the Whitefriars playhouse is estimated to have measured 35 feet x 85 feet. [Cited in *Annals of English Drama, 975-1700*, ed. by Alfred Harbage, revised by S. Schoenbaum (London: Methuen, 1964), p. 304.] Substantial adaptations of plays as performed in London were probably not necessary.

⁹⁶ Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 267.

⁹⁷ Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 271, p. 272.

⁹⁸ Henslowe reported the failure of the troupe in a letter to Edward Alleyn, himself on a provincial tour: 'As for my lorde a penbrockes wch you desier to knowe wheare they be they are all at home and hauffe ben t[his] v or sixe weackes for they cane not saue ther carges [charges] [w]th trauell as I heare & weare fayne to pane [pawn] the[r] parell for ther carge [charge].'
[David George, 'Shakespeare and Pembroke's Men', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 32 (1981), 305-323 (p. 306).]

⁹⁹ This company is believed to have included a mixture of members of the old company and new recruits. A provincial branch of the company appears to have survived the bankruptcy, several payments being made to Pembroke's Men (or the Lord President's Men) in English regional civic records between 1594-7. This troupe may not have been related to the 1592-3 company, as George notes. [George, 'Shakespeare and Pembroke's Men', p. 318.]

Lancaster, published in 1594, does not have any troupe's name on its title-page but, is 'almost certainly another Pembroke's play'.¹⁰⁰ By implication, each of the plays had been in their repertory and might have been taken on the ill-fated tour.¹⁰¹

Indirect evidence could confirm the place of at least one of these plays in the 1592-3 stock of touring texts. The tour included a performance in Bath for which the company received a payment of 16 shillings.¹⁰² In the same year, the Bath Chamberlain's Accounts include a receipt of two shillings from, 'my Lord of Penbrokes plaiers for A bowe that was broken by them'.¹⁰³ According to Tittler the damage occurred when 'the Earl of Pembroke's Players broke into the armoury of Bath Guildhall'.¹⁰⁴ However, there does not appear to be any concrete evidence that the troupe forced entry into the armoury housed in the Guildhall and it is, perhaps, more likely that they asked to borrow the bow.¹⁰⁵ Nonetheless, the fact that they had access to at least one of the town weapons suggests that their civic-sponsored performance in Bath that year was staged at the Guildhall, where the armoury was close at hand.

Why the company should wish to acquire additional weaponry is an intriguing question. A survey of Elizabethan plays reveals that weapons are most frequently required for History plays. As has been noted, the 1592-3 repertory of Pembroke's plays appears to have included several such plays (*Edward II*, *The True Tragedy*, *The Contention*, and *Titus Andronicus*). However, the Bath records only make specific reference to one rather unusual item, a 'bow'. While swords are

¹⁰⁰ Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 269.

¹⁰¹ David George has argued that the quartos were, 'cut, altered, and corrupted versions of longer texts, and [...] may have been reconstructed from memory. Lacking full-length promptbooks, Pembroke's Men seem to have sold their shortened touring texts'. [George, 'Shakespeare and Pembroke's Men', p. 306.] The description of the printed plays as condensed and corrupted versions of the original texts can be questioned, but their appearance following the broken tour does point to their inclusion in the 1592-3 touring repertory. [David Bradley has questioned whether so-called 'bad' quartos were 'made up from texts supposedly cut for touring'. (Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 42.) There is no evidence that companies were automatically reduced in size for tours and provincial performances do not appear to have been shorter in duration than in the metropolis. Indeed, many corporations complained 'about performances of excessive duration'.] [David Bradley, *From Text to Performance in the Elizabethan Theatre: Preparing the Play for the Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), p. 73.]

¹⁰² Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 276.

¹⁰³ Stokes and Alexander, I, p. 15.

¹⁰⁴ Tittler, p. 146.

¹⁰⁵ If they did force entry into the armoury it was presumably in search of weapons to use as performance props, rather than a piece of wanton vandalism. Certainly, the damage to the bow is more likely to have been caused during the following performance, than during any break-in.

frequently demanded by the action and stage directions of Elizabethan History plays, the same cannot be said of bows.

There are at least two exceptions in plays associated with Pembroke's. In *Titus Andronicus* the protagonist and his companions enter in Act IV, scene 3 'with bows' and 'arrows with letters at the end of them', ready to fire to the gods. In *The True Tragedy* King Henry is watched by two keepers in Act III, scene 1 who are required to enter 'with bow and arrowes'.¹⁰⁶ Potentially, the bow could have been used (or intended for use) in a production of either play in the guild hall. However, in recent years it has been suggested that *Titus* post-dates 1592-3.¹⁰⁷ In this instance the play performed by the troupe at Bath was almost certainly *The True Tragedy*, and for the purposes of the case-study included in the final section of this chapter, it is assumed that the latter was the play performed.

III

Plays in Performance in Provincial Town Halls: Case Studies

The most detailed contemporary account of a provincial performance is that of Robert Willis in *Mount Tabor. or Private Exercises of a Penitent Sinner* (1639). He describes a play he witnessed as a child in Gloucester Booth Hall. The title-page describes the author as being seventy-five

¹⁰⁶ William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus* in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. by G. Blakemore Evans and others (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), p. 1042.

The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York, ed. by W. W. Greg (Oxford: Oxford University, 1958), p. 40. Hereafter all references to the play will be cited in the text. All references to the play are taken from Greg's facsimile edition of the 1594 quarto. There are no act or scene divisions or line numbers in the original quarto. The act and scene numbers which are used in this chapter are based upon the act and scene divisions used in the later version of the play (*Henry VI, Part III*), as indicated in the margins of Greg's edition.

¹⁰⁷ The complications surrounding the play's date and ownership stem from the ambiguity of its 1594 title-page. This lists the play's performance by three troupes, the Earl of Derby's Men, the Earl of Pembroke's Men and the Earl of Sussex's players. Whether the play was owned by the three companies in succession is not known. By 1593-4 *Titus* was listed in Henslowe's *Diary* as a Sussex's text. As the play was printed in 1594, the listing might reflect the sequence of possession, Sussex's being the most recent owners and performers of the play. A different interpretation of the evidence is offered by David George. He suggests that the 1594 title-page 'refers to performances not by three companies in sequence, but by one company which included actors who had previously worked for the other two'. [Cited in William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. by Jonathan Bate (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 24.] Building upon George's theory, Jonathan Bate suggests that the play was new in 1594. Bate notes the omission of the standard description of the play as having been performed 'sundry times' and argues that, 'the obvious explanation is that the play had not been performed sundry times by 1594.' This is not a necessary assumption, but the suggestion that 'Q1 refers to a brand-new play performed for the first time by a large company which included "servants" who between them had loyalty to all three noblemen' is intriguing and cannot be ruled out. [Bate, p. 77.] If this theory is correct, Pembroke's could not have been performing the play in London or the provinces in 1592-3.

years of age. The performance which he recounts is likely to have occurred, therefore, in the 1570s, 'when Willis was between six and fifteen years of age.'¹⁰⁸ The account reads as follows:

In the City of Gloucester the manner is (as I think it is in other like corporations) that when Players of Enterludes come to towne, they first attend the Mayor to enforme him what noble-mans servants they are, and so to get licence for their publicke playing; and if the Mayor like the Actors, or would shew respect to their Lord and Master, he appoints them to play their first play before himselfe and the Aldermen and common Counsell of the City; and that is called the Mayor's play, where every one that will comes in without money, the Mayor giving the players a reward as hee thinks fit to shew respect unto them. At such a play, my father tooke me with him and made mee stand betweene his leggs, as he sate upon one of the benches where wee saw and heard very well. The play was called (the Cradle of security,) wherein was personated a King or some great Prince with his Courtiers of severall kinds, amongst which three Ladies were in speciall grace with him; and they keeping him in delights and pleasures, drew him from his graver Counsellors, hearing of Sermons, and listning to good counsell, and admonitions, that in the end they got him to lye downe in a cradle upon the stage, where these three Ladies joyning in a sweet song rocked him asleepe, that he snorted againe, and in the meane time closely conveyed under the cloaths where withall he was covered, a vizard like a swines snout upon his face, with three wire chaines fastned thereunto, the other end whereof being holden severally by those three Ladies, who fall to singing againe, and then discovered his face, that the spectators might see how they had transformed him, going on with their singing, whilst all this was acting, there came forth of another doore at the farthest end of the stage, two old men, the one in blew with a Serjeant at Armes, his mace on his shoulder, the other in red with a drawn sword in his hand, and leaning with the other hand upon the others shoulder, and so they two went along in a soft pace round about the skirt of the Stage, till at last they came to the Cradle, when all the Court was in greatest jollity, and then the foremost old man with his Mace stroke a fearfull blow upon the Cradle; whereat all the Courtiers with the three Ladies and the vizard all vanished; and the desolate Prince starting up bare faced, and finding himselfe thus sent for to judgement, made a lamentable complaint of his miserable case,

¹⁰⁸ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 362.

and so was carried away by wicked spirits. This Prince did personate in the morall, the wicked of the world; the three Ladies, Pride, Covetousnesse, and Luxury, the two old men, the end of the world, and the last judgement. This sight tooke such impression in me, that when I came towards mans estate, it was as fresh in my memory, as if I had seen it newly acted. ¹⁰⁹

The Play

Willis identifies the play he witnessed as *The Cradle of Security*. This play is otherwise unknown and is no longer extant. However, that it was a morality drama is evident from Willis' account and his allegorical interpretation of the play's characters (e.g. 'This Prince did personate in the morall, the wicked of the world; the three Ladies, Pride, Covetousnesse, and Luxury, and the two old men, the end of the world, and the last judgement'). ¹¹⁰

The Performers

The company responsible for the performance are not identified by Willis, possibly because he did not know or remember the name of the troupe's patron, having seen the play as a child. As he outlines the conventions observed when professional companies visited towns it is, however, more likely that the players were a noble or royal troupe. This likelihood is increased further by the knowledge that professional companies visited the town in growing numbers during the later sixteenth century.

The average number of rewards given to players in a year during the 1550s was less than one; in the 1560s it rose to nearly two, and in the 1570s to almost three companies a year. The peak period for the touring professionals was the 1580s and '90s when the average number of troupes visiting Gloucester increased to four a year, and as many as seven different companies appeared in a single year, in 1584-5. ¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Douglas and Greenfield, pp. 362-3.

¹¹⁰ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 363.

¹¹¹ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 253.

SOME DIAGRAMS
EXCLUDED ON
INSTRUCTION FROM
THE UNIVERSITY

The Location

The location for the performance is not explicitly identified by Willis but, ‘the Chamberlain’s accounts indicate that the mayors’ plays were invariably given in the Boothall’.¹¹² Although the Boothall is no longer extant surviving records provide valuable information about its location, size and functions.¹¹³ An indenture of 26 August, 1569 between the city and Robert Ingram reveals that the Boothall contained, ‘one large hall, a smaller one sometimes called the “shreeve hall”, and at the top of the stairs, the election chamber, reserved by the mayor and aldermen for their meetings’.¹¹⁴

Which part of the hall was used by players is not specified. Performances could have been staged in either the hall chamber or the election chamber. However, the ‘mayor’s play’, where ‘every one that will comes in without money’ would probably have required the large hall.¹¹⁵ Willis also describes how his father made him ‘stand betweene his leggs, as he sate upon one of the benches’, revealing that benches were used to accommodate at least part of the audience.¹¹⁶ Again, this would suggest that the larger hall was used for ‘mayor’s plays’.

The audience

Willis’ account also provides an indirect insight into the nature of the audience attending *The Cradle of Security* performance, suggesting that it was socially diverse. Not only does his own presence reveal that children as well as adults attended the play, but the free entry to the performance appears to have made plays accessible to everyone in the town, irrespective of social status. Equally, the profound effect the play exercised upon Willis’ imagination testifies to the potentially emotive power of provincial plays and players.

The Performance

Brief as his account is, Willis sheds light upon various aspects of the play’s staging, including the company’s use of costumes and props. Likewise, a cast including a King (or Prince),

¹¹² Douglas and Greenfield, p. 253.

¹¹³ Located in Westgate Street, the Booth Hall of the Elizabethan period dated back to 1529, when it was built with a bequest of eighty pounds made to the town by Thomas Gloucester. [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Gloucestershire*, IV, ed. by W. N. Herbert (Oxford: Oxford University 1988), p. 248.] The hall was rebuilt in 1607.

¹¹⁴ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 423.

¹¹⁵ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 363.

¹¹⁶ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 363.

Courtiers, three Ladies (as Pride, Covetousness, and Luxury), two old men (as the End of the World and Last Judgement) and wicked spirits is identified. The cast demands presented by this list of dramatic personae (if complete) could have been accommodated by a relatively small professional company (e.g. of eight or nine players).

Costumes

The only explicitly described costumes are those worn by the two old men: 'the one in blew with a Serjeant at Armes, his mace on his shoulder, the other in red with a drawn sword in his hand'.¹¹⁷ By implication, their costumes and props were symbolic. The mace with its connotations of justice and law enforcement identifies the first old man as 'the last judgement', while the death-dealing sword of the second old man is in keeping with his symbolic representation of 'the end of the world'. In addition, the decision to clothe the two characters in complementary primary colours may have been intended to reflect, symbolically, the pairing of judgement and doomsday. Wigs and make-up may have been used to give the illusion that the pair of actors were old men.

The wicked spirits who transport the Prince from the stage are likely to have been costumed in traditional symbolic fashion. They may have worn the 'ugly masks' characteristic of devils in Tudor interludes, for example.¹¹⁸ Alternatively, costumes like those traditionally worn by damned souls could have been adopted (e.g. in *All For Money*, 'Iudas commeth in like a damned soule, in blacke painted with flames of fire, and with a fearefull vizard'.) (own emphasis).¹¹⁹

There is also some suggestion that the three Ladies were attired symbolically, allowing them to be identified as Pride, Covetousness and Luxury. Conventional contemporary representations of allegorical figures may provide a guide to the apparel worn by the three players during the Gloucester performance. The lady representing Pride might have worn red and been richly dressed, for example, as she is in Ripa's contemporary *Iconologia*.¹²⁰ The player might also have

¹¹⁷ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 363.

¹¹⁸ T. W. Craik, *The Tudor Interlude*, 3rd edn (Leicester: Leicester University, 1958; repr. 1967), p. 52.

¹¹⁹ Craik, p. 52.

¹²⁰ In Ripa the lady personifying Pride wears many jewels as well and admires herself in a mirror. It was thought that Pride should be, 'dressed in red, for pride is most often found among sanguine or choleric types of people'. Likewise, according to Ripa (1603), 'her rich and bejewelled garments represent the physical evidence of their own superiority which the proud seem to require. She admires herself in a mirror, for the prideful always seem to see themselves as good and beautiful, refusing to admit any imperfection'. [Cesare Ripa, *Baroque and Rococo Pictorial Imagery*, ed. and translated by

worn a wig of elaborately dressed hair, a style which *Pride* recommends to Mary in Wager's *Mary Magdalene* play.¹²¹ 'Luxury' might have worn red as well, because of the colour's associations with the carnal.¹²² The player representing 'Covetousness' may have worn apparel which combined aspects of clothing and appearance associated with personifications of envy and greed (e.g. her costume might have included the money bags often associated with avarice in illustrations and plays of the period in England and Europe).¹²³

The costuming of the play's protagonist is not described but Willis' recognition of his royal status indicates that the player wore some kind of regal garb (e.g. a crown). At the same time, extravagant clothing might have been used to reflect his vanity and sinfulness as the play's representative of 'the wicked of the world'. As Craik notes:

When sumptuary laws prevented, or at least condemned, excesses in apparel, it would be instantly perceived that a character in a feathered hat, slashed doublet, scalloped sleeves and (later) bombasted breeches was full of vanity and wickedness.¹²⁴

Craik is discussing earlier fashions and the drama of interludes, but his point about the significance of excessively flamboyant clothing is equally applicable to the Elizabethan period, when sumptuary laws remained in place. The costumes of the other courtiers do not appear to have carried any particular meaning, but one would expect them to have been richly dressed. Their costumes may have been individualised in some ways as well, as Willis alludes to the Prince with his 'Courtiers of severall kinds'.¹²⁵

[Cesare Ripa, *Baroque and Rococo Pictorial Imagery*, ed. and trans. by Edward A. Maser (New York: Dover, 1971), plate 126.]

¹²¹ Craik, p. 59.

¹²² Equally, the player could have worn a wreath of vine leaves and colewort, as does the goat-footed satyr depicted as 'luxuria' in Ripa. Vine leaves were associated with wine and drinking, both of which were believed to stimulate the libido. Colewort 'was supposed to have the same effect'. [Ripa, plate 132.]

¹²³ Craik, p. 60.

¹²⁴ Craik, p. 57.

¹²⁵ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 363.

Props

The players appear to have made use of several props during the performance, including the sword and mace of the two old men.¹²⁶ Likewise, Willis records their ingenious use of a swine's mask and the cradle of the title of the play. Presumably, the cradle in which the Prince was rocked was large enough to accommodate a full-grown player. Acting troupes are known to owned and travelled with a selection of props.¹²⁷

The description of the vizard is equally intriguing, Willis' account supplying details of its construction and use: 'a vizard like a swines snout [...], with three wire chains fastned thereunto, the other end of which being holden severally by those three Ladies'.¹²⁸ The three chains attached to the mask indicate that the mask was specially adapted or made for the performance, allowing the ladies to hold it in place over the Prince's face for the duration of the transformation scene. Finally, although not specified, stage furniture may have been used to create the court setting (e.g. a chair might have been set up as a throne).

Staging

The account of the play summarises the main points of action, only the staging of key episodes being described in more detail. Hence, Willis does not elaborate upon the manner in which the three ladies 'drew (the King) from his graver Counsellors, hearing of Sermons', but he records the performance of the transformation scene in some detail:

these three Ladies joyning in a sweet song rocked him asleepe, [...] he snorted againe, and in the meane time closely conveyed under the cloaths where withall he was covered, a vizard like a swines snout upon his face, with three wire chaines fastned thereunto, the other end whereof being holden severally by those three Ladies, who fall to singing againe, and then discovered his face,

¹²⁶ While the sword may have been real, the mace is unlikely to have resembled the increasingly elaborate and decorative maces of provincial corporations. It may have been like more traditional maces, whose primary function was as a weapon.

¹²⁷ When the Earl of Leicester's Men travelled to court for a performance in December 1576, for example, five shillings was paid by the Revels Office 'for Cariadge by water of a paynted cloth and two frames ... for the Earle of Leicesters'. Presumably, these items of stage furniture belonged to the troupe and were to be used in the performance. [Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages, 1300-1600*, 4 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959-1981), II: i (1965), p. 277.]

¹²⁸ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 363.

that the spectators might see how they had transformed him.¹²⁹

The use of the mask and the sleight of hand by which it is fitted represent the ingenious means by which the transformation is effected. We also learn something about the acting style of the company and their relationship with the audience, Willis suggesting that the 'Ladies' make a point of revealing the transformed Prince to the audience.¹³⁰

The entry of the two old men, likewise, receives more detailed description:

there came forth of another doore at the farthest end of the stage, two old men, the one in blew with a Serjeant at Armes, his mace on his shoulder, the other in red with a drawn sword in his hand, and leaning with the other hand upon the others shoulder, and so they two went along in a soft pace round about by the skirt of the stage, till as last they came to the Cradle, when all the Court was in greatest jollity.¹³¹

In this case, Willis provides an insight into the company's use of the stage space and the location of the stage. The entry of the two men from a door at 'the farthest end of the stage', suggests that the cradle was located somewhere on the fore part of the stage and that the stage was set near or against a wall flanked by more than one door.¹³²

The description of their procession around the skirt of the stage represents a more curious moment of staging. Their circuitous entry, witnessed by the audience but not by the on-stage court, would seem to have been a means of generating dramatic suspense. However, it is not clear whether Willis is describing a circuit upon the stage platform or a procession around the stage upon the hall floor. The staging would be interesting in either instance, alternatively

¹²⁹ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 363.

¹³⁰ The singing of the ladies prior to, and after, the transformation indicates that the players had some musical talents and may have deliberately combined musical and dramatic entertainment.

¹³¹ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 363.

¹³² The manner of the old men's procession is equally intriguing. The appearance of the first old man leaning upon the second could indicate that they were using a symbolic mode of acting, the stage image created reflecting the way in which the end of the world follows upon the day of final judgement. Similar moments of symbolic action are to be found in a number of allegorical interludes. In Bale's *King John*, for example, 'formal action is used to show how one evil brings in another'. Private Wealth, Dissimulation and Usurped Power carry the actor of Sedition on stage in a literalisation of the play's lesson that the former evils lead to the latter. [Cited in Craik, p. 97.]

demonstrating the company's full use of the stage platform or their readiness to expand the playing area beyond the stage for dramatic effect.

The allusion to the 'skirt' of the stage could also be significant in terms of our understanding of the stage and its construction. While it might simply signify the edge of the stage it is also possible that it was a literal description, signifying that the stage was fringed by a skirt of cloth, as was apparently the case in some London playhouses.¹³³ The portrait of Mary Queen of Scots' execution scaffold (erected in the hall of Fotheringhay Castle in 1587) provides an insight into the appearance of such skirted stages. The symbolic black colouring of the cloths draping the Fotheringhay stage would have been equally appropriate for *The Cradle of Security* performance. Indeed, a stage hung with black cloths was the typical backdrop for tragedies in some of the London Theatres.¹³⁴

The performance of the play's dramatic finale is recounted by Willis in similarly tantalising fashion:

then the foremost old man with his mace stroke a fearfull blow upon the Cradle;
whereat all the Courtiers with the three Ladies and the vizard all vanished; and
the desolate Prince starting up barefaced, and finding himselfe thus sent for to
judgement, made a lamentable complaint of his miserable case, and so was
carried away by wicked spirit.¹³⁵

Willis' description of the old man's striking of the cradle suggests that the blow was either enacted (in which case the mace and the cradle must have been of sturdy construction) or it was mimed convincingly (e.g. they might have used a sound effect to give the illusion that the blow was real). The disappearance of the courtiers and Ladies could have involved an even more impressive feat of staging if the players did manage to give the illusion that they had vanished.

¹³³ Wickham describes such cloths as a standard feature of public theatres and suggests that they corresponded to the 'cloths hung around the base of pageant waggons to conceal wheels or porters from public view'. [Wickham, II:i, p. 317.]

¹³⁴ In the Induction to the anonymous tragedy, *A Fair Warning for Fair Women* (performed at the Globe in 1599) 'History' alludes to the stage being 'hung with black' and describes the audience as being prepared for tragedy. [Cited in John Orrell, 'Melpomene and Thalia on Stage', unpublished paper, 1995, p. 1.]

¹³⁵ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 363.

However, it is more likely that they fled the stage, the Ladies carrying the vizard with them on their wires. Their exit must have been prompt.

It would be fascinating to discover the precise content of the protagonist's 'lamentable complaint', and the manner in which his player delivered the speech. As the character is likely to have moralised upon the short-comings of his life and the precautionary example offered the audience, the speech could have been delivered directly to the spectators in a didactic manner.

The Prince's final removal from the stage by the wicked spirits reinforces the play's moral; and, judging by the profound impression made upon Willis, the episode was powerfully staged by the company at Gloucester. Performed by players wearing demon costumes, it is not surprising that the scene proved frightening for members of the audience.¹³⁶

Willis closes his account of the play with an explication of the play's meaning. Unless his father explained the 'moral' of the drama to him or the significance of the play was explained during the performance (e.g. by the Prince in his final complaint or through an epilogue), Willis' interpretation suggests that the drama's allegorical lesson was explicit enough to be understood by children and adults alike. Equally, it could be a testimony to the familiarity of most Elizabethan and Jacobean people with allegories and their interpretation. If the latter is true, it suggests that provincial audiences could be adept interpreters of dramatic visual language.

The Performance of the Earl of Pembroke's Men at Bath, 1592-3

The second case-study takes as its subject the possible performance of *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* in Bath Guildhall by Pembroke's Men during their 1593 provincial tour. In this instance, there is no contemporary account to guide us. The evidence for the play's

¹³⁶ The genuine fear which the dramatic representation of spirits and demons could excite is revealed in the anecdotal story of an Exeter performance of *Dr. Faustus*. During this performance a real demon was feared to have joined the players on stage: 'Certaine Players at Exeter acted upon the stage the tragicall storie of Dr. Faustus the Conjuror; as a certain number of Devels kept everie one his circle there, and as Faustus was busie in his magicall invocations, on a sudden they were dasht, every one harkning other in the eare, for they were all perswaded there was one devell too many amongst them; and so after a little pause desired the people to pardon them, they could go no further with this matter; the people also understanding the thing as it was, every man hastened to be first out of dores'. [This account, recorded by 'J. G. R.' in 1850, is cited in E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), III (repr. 1961), p. 424.]

performance is indirect (being based upon our knowledge of the company's likely repertory and the payment made by the company for damaging a bow belonging to the corporation), as indicated above (pp. 75-6). The possible staging of the play can be explored drawing upon our knowledge of the play and the playing space used.

Pembroke's Men and the 1592-3 Tour

A number of troupes claimed the patronage of the Earl of Pembroke during the early modern period.¹³⁷ The players involved in the 1593 tour belonged to the new company founded in 1591.¹³⁸ This company consisted of at least fifteen, and perhaps as many as twenty, permanent members. Up to four of the performers may have been boys.

The tour appears to have started sometime in the autumn of 1592, with the company returning to London for two court performances over Christmas (26 December, 1592, 6 January, 1593) and then continuing their tour of the provinces until forced home by financial difficulties.¹³⁹ Our

¹³⁷ The earliest record of 'players wearing the livery of Henry Herbert, the second Earl of Pembroke, and from 1586 the Lord President of Wales, is a single entry by the Canterbury officials as far back as 1575-6'. [Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, pp. 266-7.]

¹³⁸ The impetus for the troupe's formation at this date is not known. 'Why Herbert, who by 1592 was spending much of his time in Ludlow and the Welsh Marches in his function as Lord President, should have chosen to set up a new company so late in his career (he was fifty-seven in 1591), is one of many questions about the role of noble patrons who set up new playing companies through these years to which there is no direct answer'. Different explanations have been advanced. Pembroke's third wife, Mary Herbert, may have played a role in the company's formation. She certainly had an interest in drama, translating a French play by Garnier in 1591 and commissioning 'Daniel to write its sequel'. Another possibility explored by Gurr is that the troupe was set up by James Burbage following his quarrel with Edward Alleyn in May 1591, and the departure of Strange's Men from Burbage's theatre. He might have applied to Pembroke to sponsor the troupe. A number of early scholars concluded instead that the troupe was an offshoot 'of the Strange's-Admirals amalgamation' of the 1590s. [Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 267, p. 268.] This theory has been echoed more recently by David George: 'Pembroke's company, almost certainly, was a Strange's protégé; no new companies appeared of their own accord in the straitened early 1590s'. [George, 'Shakespeare and Pembroke's Men', p. 320.] G. M. Pinciss questions George's theory and offers another account of events in 1591: 'The suggestion [...] that Pembroke's Men consisted of actors from Strange's and the Admiral's does not account for the appearance in provincial records of both these troupes after 1591. [...] It is only the disappearance of the Lanham-directed branch of the Queen's that synchronises perfectly with the short life of Pembroke's Men.' [G. M. Pinciss, 'Shakespeare, Her Majesty's Players, and Pembroke's Men', *Shakespeare Survey*, 27 (1974), 129-136 (p. 134).] Unfortunately, the limits of surviving evidence prevent us from establishing which, if any, of the theories is accurate.

¹³⁹ If Simon Jewell was a Pembroke's Man when he died, his will provides evidence of the company's preparations for travelling, alluding to his share of 'horses waggen and aparell newe boughte'. [Cited in Mary Edmond, 'Pembroke's Men', *Review of English Studies*, 25 (1974), 129-136 (p. 129).] Likewise, the inclusion of his name in a stage direction in *The Taming of A Shrew* could provide evidence of the company's artistic preparations for the tour, suggesting that the 1594 text was 'printed from a manuscript used for casting' and, therefore, that 'Pembroke's Men cast and perhaps rehearsed

knowledge of the 1592-3 itinerary is confined to the evidence of those corporations or churchwardens which made payments to the company. This evidence reveals that they visited King's Lynn, Ipswich, Leicester, Ludlow, Shrewsbury, Bath, Rye, York, Coventry, Caludon Castle, and Bewdley.¹⁴⁰ The exact dates of the performances are not known, although the order of the list reflects their possible sequence. The regional clustering of several venues suggests that the company travelled upon established touring circuits.¹⁴¹ Notably, a number of the towns visited by the troupe during their western circuit fall within the Marcher territories presided over by their patron as Lord President of the Council of the Marches. This is unlikely to have been a coincidence. Either the company were serving their patron's ends or hoping to gain greater rewards from the corporations which fell within his sphere of influence.

The Performance at Bath, 1593

The Bath Guildhall

Although the Elizabethan hall at Bath does not survive, a relatively detailed reconstruction can be offered, drawing upon the evidence of the Chamberlain's accounts from 1569 onwards and descriptions of the building.¹⁴² The building is thought to have been timber-framed, and in 1765 John Wood described 'the old shambles, formed from the major portion or "hall" of the Old Guildhall [...] as a court 56 feet in length by 24 in breadth'.¹⁴³ Although it is not clear whether these dimensions reflect the internal or external size of the hall they provide a guide to its measurements.

Internally, the hall is believed to have contained a meeting hall, a ground-floor kitchen, pantry and buttery, a council chamber (over the kitchen) and an armoury (adjoining the council

[...] plays before they set off on tour'. [George, 'Shakespeare and Pembroke's Men', p. 311.]

¹⁴⁰ Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 276.

The troupe's performance at Caludon Castle is recorded by Peter H. Greenfield in 'Entertainments of Henry, Lord Berkeley, 1593-4 and 1600-5', *REED Newsletter*, 8:1 (1983), 12-24 (p. 14). The payment was made some time in, or after, June. This means that it was probably one of the troupe's last performances before the troupe broke up and returned to London. Whether it pre- or post-dated the troupe's performance at Bewdley is not clear.

¹⁴¹ They appear to have made one or more southern circuits (taking in King's Lynn, Ipswich and Rye), a westerly tour (probably moving from the Bath/ Bristol area up through the Marches, visiting the Midlands either en route or returning from the West), and, finally, an attempted northern tour (e.g. they visited York). The expense of the latter may have contributed to the company's eventual bankruptcy.

¹⁴² Holland, p. 169.

¹⁴³ Holland, p. 170.

chamber). Elizabeth Holland has prepared a pair of floor plans which show the likely organisation of the Hall c. 1500 [see plate 17]. Some modifications were made before 1592 (e.g. a bailiff's court was created in the 1580s, probably in the area previously occupied by the stairs to the council chamber, and the stairs were moved into the kitchen as part of a programme of renovations in the council house).

By the time of the 1592-3 visit by Pembroke's Men the hall was paved with stone, fitted with glazed windows and a bay window. The latter may have been fitted at the upper or dais end of the hall 'to throw more light on the high table'.¹⁴⁴ Spectators probably would have entered the hall via the main entrance (possibly located on the western side of the building). This entrance-way may have been fronted by a porch.¹⁴⁵

If the Mayor and his brethren chose to entertain the players in some way it is likely that they invited them to the council chamber. The first-floor chamber may have been made available to Pembroke's Men as a preparation area prior to performance, or as a tiring house during the play (if they performed at the lower end of the hall). At the time of the company's visit they would have found the hall simply furnished, being 'wainscoted and provided with benches' from the 1580s.¹⁴⁶

Next door to the council chamber lay the armoury, into which Pembroke's Men may have forced entry in 1592-3.¹⁴⁷ The room was not large, as a payment for its plastering in 1598 indicates: 'vj d' was paid for 'plasteringe of the Little Chaumber where the Armor lyeth'.¹⁴⁸ The armour was not locked away but 'hung in hooks or "pinns" against mats (1581) fastened to the wainscoting'. It would not have been difficult, therefore, to remove an item of weaponry once within the

¹⁴⁴ Holland, p. 174.

¹⁴⁵ As the Guildhall possessed an 'owter door', with lock (1585), one surmises that it had an entrance porch, of which the 'wainscot door' with its bolt (1583) was perhaps the interior door. The way between (the two doors) was paved (1587). 'The Guildhall dore' was painted. [Holland, p. 174.] The references to the decoration of the porch could suggest that it was intended to impress those entering the hall with a sense of the corporation's status and wealth (like the more elaborate frontage added to Exeter's town hall in the 1590s). It may have encouraged audience members to feel that they were entering a special, privileged cultural space when they attended a town hall performance.

¹⁴⁶ Holland, p. 178.

¹⁴⁷ As the room appears to have been reached through the council chamber, the likelihood that the company was allowed some access to, or the use of, the council chamber as they prepared for their performance is increased.

¹⁴⁸ Holland, p. 178.

SOME DIAGRAMS
EXCLUDED ON
INSTRUCTION FROM
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chamber.¹⁴⁹ The fact that Pembroke's Men had to pay the city for the damaged bow indicates that it was an item of corporate property and, hence, from the city's stock of weapons stored in the armoury. The town is known to have owned bows, as well as 'arrows, pikes, bills and halberds, [...] swords and daggers', and some guns.¹⁵⁰ However, as noted above, the bow might have been borrowed rather than stolen by the company.

The Play

The Bath corporation's receipt of two shillings from the troupe for damaging a bow could indicate that the play performed by the company at Bath was *The True Tragedy Of Richard Duke of York*, as noted above (pp. 75-6). The play has an intriguing history. It was published in quarto form in 1595, without having been recorded in the Stationer's Register, and is a version of the text later printed as *Henry VI, Part 3*. Traditionally, it has been regarded as a 'Bad' quarto of the Shakespeare play. It is a designation of the play which reflects the common assumption that the early Shakespeare quartos are of inferior quality, being based upon flawed memorial reconstructions.

The True Tragedy occasionally differs from *Henry VI, Part 3* in its language and in the organisation of scenes, but these differences are not necessarily evidence of artistic inferiority or incoherence. As Scott McMillin notes, the elimination of the 'most interesting and intricate poetry [...] with virtually systematic thoroughness' from the quarto may reflect an adaptation in keeping with a provincial taste for colloquial, rather than poetic drama.¹⁵¹

'Bad' quartos such as *The True Tragedy* defy characterisation as inferior texts in another respect, as Graham Holderness and Bryan Loughrey point out:

Even if the theory of memorial reconstruction is correct (and it is considerably more controversial than is recognised), these quarto texts would provide a unique window on to the plays as they were originally performed.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Holland, p. 178.

¹⁵⁰ Holland, p. 179.

¹⁵¹ McMillin, 'Casting for Pembroke's Men', p. 144.

¹⁵² Graham Holderness and Bryan Loughrey, eds, *A Pleasant Conceited Historie, called The Taming of A Shrew* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp. 7-8.

Other scholars have made similar points. Assuming that the quarto history plays represent ‘the plays which Pembroke’s Men were performing in 1592-3’, McMillin observes that, ‘the texts should contain evidence about the specific theatrical practices of the company’, when in London and on tour.¹⁵³

Performance Preparations

Preparing the Space

As the troupe had, or gained access to, a bow from Bath’s town armoury it is likely that they were performing at the Guildhall (where the armoury was close at hand). Here, the company might have utilised the council chamber for their performance, measuring approximately 24 feet by 10 feet. However, it is more likely that they would choose to perform in the larger ‘meeting hall’ (approximately 45 by 24 feet). It is also likely that they performed upon a stage (possibly a demountable platform which they carried with them on tour). This platform could have been located at the lower end of the hall, but analogous evidence relating to college and private house performances suggests that the usual playing place in the Elizabethan period was the upper or dais end of halls.¹⁵⁴

A performance at the upper end of the Bath hall would have identified the players with other distinguished guests and other forms of ceremonial display; and the neighbouring buttery in the Bath hall could have afforded a tiring area and an off-stage doorway for entries and exits. The main difficulty posed in locating the performance at the dais end relates to the staging of those scenes calling for delivery from an upper level (e.g. when Warwick speaks from the walls

¹⁵³ McMillin, ‘Casting for Pembroke’s Men’, p. 144.

¹⁵⁴ If the troupe had erected a stage at the lower end of the hall they might have used the bailiff’s court as a tiring-house and its doorway as an entrance point. Another entrance could have been provided by the kitchen passage or the pantry, if its doorway opened into the hall. Performing at the lower end of the hall, the company might have had access to the platform shown in Holland’s first floor plan [see plate 17]. Whether this platform remained in place in 1592-3 is difficult to determine, but it is possible that it had been preserved after the renovations at the guildhall in the 1580s. This upper level would have been particularly useful for those scenes located aloft, as when the Mayor of York addresses Edward from the town walls in Act IV, scene 2.

On the other hand, the stage (or playing area) would have obstructed entry to the kitchen if located at the lower end of the hall, unless it were particularly small (e. g. less than ten feet wide). This would have been a problem if the performance were to be given as part of a banquet entertainment or if refreshments were supposed to be served during the play. In addition, performance at the less prestigious end of the hall could have seemed incompatible with the players’ role as representatives of the Earl and his status.

of Coventry, Act V, scene 1).¹⁵⁵ The problem could have been overcome by creating a small raised platform next to, or at the back of the dais or stage. Curtains or painted cloths could have been used to disguise the elevation and to give the illusion of 'walls', if painted with a stonework design. The upper end of the hall would not have supplied the two doorways called for in a number of the play's scenes either. Again, this problem could have been easily overcome, the most obvious solution being to use the opposite sides of the stage (or playing area) as the two entry points.

The size of the stage (if one were used) can only be conjectured. In his account of performances in Leicester guildhall Somerset suggested that 'players would require about 20 x 20 feet as an acting space'.¹⁵⁶ However, the hall at Leicester is greater in size (65 x 20 feet). A platform of 20 x 20 feet would seem too large for the Bath hall, monopolising almost half the available floor area. In this case, a stage 15 x 10 feet might have been more practical (although an even smaller platform could have been used). A platform of 15 x 10 feet would occupy less than a third of the hall's length and would leave space on either side of the stage (e.g. for entries and exits). Room could have been left behind the stage as well for use as a tiring-area if the buttery was unavailable or deemed unsuitable. This area could have been screened by a curtain at the rear of the stage.¹⁵⁷

The benches that were to be found in the council chamber may have been borrowed to provide some seating for the occasion. Using Gurr's calculation that seated Elizabethan spectators required approximately 18 in. by 18 in. space each on average, and allowing a third of the hall for the playing area, well over three hundred people might have been accommodated in the meeting hall for the performance.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Another possible solution to the staging problem would have been to rely upon the spectators' imaginative capacities, requiring them to imagine the city walls and to pretend that the players delivered their speeches from aloft.

¹⁵⁶ Somerset, 'How chances it they travel?', p. 59.

¹⁵⁷ The height of the stage is another matter for conjecture as there are no records about the elevation of provincial stages. The stage at the Globe is believed to have been raised to a height of five feet but the platform at Bath need not have been as high. Indeed, if the actors were to enter and exit from the sides of the stage, and if the audience was mainly seated, a lower platform would have been desirable.

¹⁵⁸ Cited in Somerset, 'How chances it they travel?', p. 59.

Calculating the audience capacity of the hall

Space available (with a stage of 15 ft x 10 ft) = 930 ft square

or 133920 in. square

Theoretically, the Bath auditorium could accommodate over 400 people (413 to be precise). However, spectators are unlikely to have used every inch of space unoccupied by the stage, and this calculation

Casting

McMillin calculates that Pembroke's Men consisted of approximately twenty players, in keeping with the fashion for larger cast plays and larger size companies of the 1590s.¹⁵⁹ However, the five supernumeraries posited in his account of the company may not have been permanent members and may not have been included in the tour. A company of fifteen players could have performed most of the plays associated with the company (including *The True Tragedy*), although careful and demanding schemes of doubling would have been necessary. A specimen casting list for the *The True Tragedy* relying upon a troupe of only fifteen players is given in appendix iii. If extra people were needed or desired (e.g. for plays like *The Contention*) they might have been hired locally.

Costumes

There are few explicit references to the costuming of characters in the play. Those that occur only allude to certain aspects of the characters' garb. In the opening scene, for example, the text calls for the Yorkists and Lancastrians to appear wearing hats and appropriately coloured roses:

Enter *Richard* Duke of Yorke, The Earle of *Warwicke*, The Duke of *Norffolke*,
Marquis Montague, Edward Earle of *March*, *Crookeback* Richard, and the yong
 Earle of *Rutland*, with Drumme and Souldiers, with white Roses in their hats.

[...]

Enter king *Henrie* the Sixt, with the Duke of *Excester*, The Earle of *Northumberland*,
 the Earle of *Westmerland* and *Clifford*, the Earle of *Cumberland*, with red Roses in
 their hats. [*The True Tragedy*, pp. 1-3.]

There is some indication that the hats and roses were to be worn in similar fashion throughout the play. In Act I, scene 2 Richard describes how he 'cannot ioie till this white rose be dide, / Euen in the hart bloud of the house of *Lancaster*', and in Act V, scene 1 Clarence's return to the Yorkists is signalled by his spurning of the red Lancaster rose which he wears: 'Clarence takes

makes no allowances for room left behind or at the sides of the stage, or for aisle ways. Hence, a capacity to hold around c. 350 spectators might represent a more realistic estimate.

¹⁵⁹ Gurr traces the change in the composition of acting companies to the establishment of the Queen's Men in 1583: 'Its twelve sharers made a bigger company than ever before. Within a few years plays were being written for exceptionally large casts, though they shrank again a little after 1594'. [Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, pp. 28-9.]

his red Rose out of his hat, and throwes it at *Warwicke*' (*The True Tragedy*, p. 67).¹⁶⁰ Other evidence for the costuming of the play's characters is indirect. Textual evidence informs us that Henry and Edward both wear a crown as king. Likewise, a priest's dress is implicitly demanded for the Earl of Rutland's tutor. Clifford says, 'awaie [...] thy Priesthood saves thy life' (*The True Tragedy*, p. 12).¹⁶¹

The play's evidence relating to the likely representation of Richard 'Crookback' is more ambiguous. In Act III, scene 3 Richard describes himself, saying that Love

did corrupt fraile nature in the flesh,
 And plaste an enuios mountaine on my backe,
 Where sits deformity to mocke my bodie,
 To drie mine arme vp like a withered shrimpe,
 To make my legges of an vnequall size,
 And am I then a man to be belou'd ?
 (*The True Tragedy*, p. 45).

The company could have relied solely upon the power of such descriptions and the audience's imagination, but the illusion of these deformities could have been reproduced visually through the costume and acting style of Richard's player (e.g. the Pembroke's man taking his part could have been fitted with a hunchback.)

More generally, the play implicitly requires fine quality dresses for the play's female characters. The only woman's role not requiring fine attire would have been that of the Nurse in the play's final scene. While the company may have commissioned dresses in styles believed to be historically appropriate, it is more likely that the gowns used by Pembroke's Men were contemporary in style.

The soldiers of the play were probably played in contemporary dress as well and equipped in a way that identified their martial role. For example, they probably carried weapons and may have

¹⁶⁰ Probably the roses were made from cloth, rather than being real as fresh roses would require regular replacement and would not always be available.

¹⁶¹ Henry must appear 'disguisde' in Act III, sc. 1 (p. 40) of *The True Tragedy* as well. However, the nature of his disguise and his costume as King is not specified.

worn imitation armour of the kind described in the 1548-9 inventory of 'Plaiers Apparell' in St. John's College, Cambridge ('A pece of painted cloth like a sheld or brestplate').¹⁶²

Stage Furniture/ Props

The play demands a number of props, implicitly and explicitly, including drums, trumpets, red and white roses, a throne, a seat, a crown, a bow, arrows, a napkin (dipped in 'blood'), a book, keys, martial 'colours', letters and a fake human head (brandished as the head of Somerset in Act I, scene 1 and possibly doubling as York's head in Act II, scene 2).¹⁶³

Fake bodies may have been found in Pembroke's stock of props as well, if the company chose not to use players for the parts of the dead father and son in Act II, scene 5. Similarly, the baby Prince brought on stage in the final scene is likely to have been represented by a doll, unless a real child was hired or borrowed for each performance.¹⁶⁴ Fake blood is likely to have been another important staging prop, several scenes calling for bloody spectacles. In Act I, scene 4, for example, Margaret is supposed to give York a napkin bathed in the blood of his son, the Earl of Rutland (*The True Tragedy*, p. 19); and in Act II, scene 6 Clifford is called to enter 'wounded, with an arrow in his necke' (*The True Tragedy*, p. 36). The troupe might have relied upon their spectators' imaginative powers alone, but evidence from the world of London playing indicates that a degree of stage realism was preferred.¹⁶⁵

There is also some suggestion that props were expected to be used to stage the vision of three suns shared by Edward and Richard in Act II, scene 1. Although the pair's detailed verbal invocation of the scene could suggest that the audience were expected to conjure the vision

¹⁶² Nelson, I, p. 162.

The actors taking the part of the 'Hollanders' who accompany Edward in Act IV, scene 7 may have worn slightly different costumes or colours to distinguish them from the Yorkists and Lancastrians.

¹⁶³ Companies are known to have owned and used similar props when in London. Henslowe's stock of properties at the Rose theatre in 1598 included 'old Mahomet's head'. [Cited in S. H. Burton, *Shakespeare's Life and Stage* (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1989), p. 177.] Likewise, other play texts call explicitly for the use of fake heads. In the 1616 edition of *Faustus* a decapitation is preceded by a direction, 'Enter Faustus with the false head'. [Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 120.]

¹⁶⁴ Payments relating to a 1565-6 performance of *Sapientia Solomonis* by the boys of Westminster School included an amount given to 'a woman that brought her childe to the stadge and there attended upon it'. This suggests that the child was involved in the performance. [Cited in Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, II, p. 72.]

¹⁶⁵ 'Stage realism did have its simpler levels, of course. Bladders or sponges of vinegar concealed in the armpit and squeezed to produce the semblance of blood were not unknown, and many other realistic details testify to the esteem the players had for realism on this level.' [Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 120.]

imaginatively, the quarto stage-direction implies that the author expected the vision to be presented literally:

Three sunnes apeare in the aire

Edw. Loe how the morning opes her golden gates,
And takes her farewell of the glorious sun,
Dasell mine eies or doe I see three suns ?

Rich. Three glorius suns, not separated by a racking
Cloud, but seuered in a pale cleere shining skie,
See, see, they ioine, embrace, and seeme to kisse
As if they vowde some league inuioulate:
Now are they but one lampe, one light, one sun,
In this the heauens doth figure some euent.

(*The True Tragedy*, p. 20.)

Richard's allusion to 'lamps' and 'lights' might afford a clue to the manner in which the curious event was staged. Three suns could have been represented by lamps or candles. Performed at night in a candle-lit hall this trick of staging might have been quite effective.

The play's action includes a number of specified settings which may or may not have been represented visually, such as the walls of York and Coventry (Act IV, sc. 7 and Act V, sc. 1). Once more, spectators might have been called upon to envisage the walls and gates of the two towns, but it is probable that some attempt was made to represent them physically. The walls could have been represented by a raised area hung with cloth at the back of the stage, as indicated above. The platform or raised area needed to be of a reasonable size as during the scene at Coventry (Act V, sc. 1), Warwick has to be joined by other characters upon the upper level (e.g. Oxford's Post and Somerfield, and, possibly, a separate Post from Montague.)¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ The fact that one of the scenes in *The Contention* also calls for staging upon city walls increases the likelihood that the company used props to create the setting while on tour. In scene 16 (or Act IV, scene 5) the stage direction calls for the entry of 'Lord Skayles vpon the Tower walles walking', while 'three or foure Citizens' enter below.

[*The First Part of the Contention of the Houses of York and Lancaster*, ed. by Charles Praetorius (London: Praetorius, 1889), p. 49.]

However, the two city-wall scenes would have been more easily staged if the city gates were imaginatively located off-stage, no doorway being available at Bath to double as the city's entry point in either scene. The quarto stage direction which accompanies the Mayor's opening of the York gates in Act IV, scene 7 reveals that a door would usually be identified as the city entrance in lieu of a gateway. The Mayor is described as opening 'the dore' and bringing 'the keies in his hand' (*The True Tragedy*, p. 61). At Bath, the York Mayor could have descended from his platform and entered the stage from the side, in keeping with the pretence that the gates are off-stage.

Additional props may have been necessary for the production of the play's battle scenes, the stage directions calling for drums, trumpets, 'alarmes' and the discharging of 'chambers'. Drums and trumpets were a standard part of travelling companies' property stocks, being used to announce performances. A bell and gun (or fireworks) would have provided the means of producing the remaining sound effects.

Conclusion

There are more references to performances being staged in town halls (between 1559-1625) than there are to productions in any other provincial venue. As well as reflecting the fact that civic halls lent themselves to use as temporary theatres (being one of the few, indoor communal spaces in most towns), the favouring of town halls as provincial playing venues provides further indirect testimony to drama's popularity and perceived cultural importance in early modern regional communities in England. As noted above, town halls were increasingly perceived as being symbolically at the heart of the social space in provincial English towns. To be allowed to perform within these locally significant buildings was to occupy a key social space.

Town hall playing was to decline, however, in the early seventeenth century and some towns passed orders explicitly prohibiting the use of their civic buildings for play performances (although their reasons for introducing such legislation were varied and not necessarily or exclusively anti-theatrical). Civic halls perhaps became less attractive playing venues as corporations introduced tighter restrictions upon the use of civic buildings and became less likely to sponsor performances. The possibility of being charged to use town halls for performances may also have deterred troupes from using some towns' civic buildings. At the same time,

alternative, and more readily available, venues emerged in some towns, encouraging troupes to abandon town halls as their first choice of venue (e.g. Bristol had two playhouses in the early seventeenth century, and in Salisbury players were actively encouraged to use The George Inn in the High Street for plays from 1624).¹⁶⁷ The tradition of staging plays in civic buildings was not one which died out easily or rapidly, however. Plays continued to be performed in Civic halls in towns such as Blandford Forum (Dorset) throughout the Jacobean period.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, I, p. 336.

¹⁶⁸ Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 127.

CHAPTER THREE

Drama in England's Renaissance Schools and Universities

England's schools and colleges were another arena for regional theatrical activity in the Elizabethan and Jacobean era, school houses and University colleges being used as playing places on numerous occasions throughout the period. Most of the plays performed were academic dramas staged by the students themselves.¹ Performances by professional travelling companies are recorded as well but only occasionally.²

The plays performed in Elizabethan and Jacobean schools were typically classical (i.e. written by classical authors or contemporary plays modelled upon classical dramas and drawing upon classical sources). They were also usually in Latin, although performances of plays in English are recorded.³ There were sound pedagogical reasons for encouraging students to perform plays (especially in Latin), as indicated in chapter one. The 'fluid, conversational, colloquial Latin' in which the plays of writers such as Terence and Plautus were couched promised to provide an ideal model for those learning the ancient language.⁴ At the same time, their performance afforded an opportunity to enhance the oratorical skills

¹ F. P. Wilson defines 'academic drama' as follows: 'The term academic drama may mean a variety of things. It includes the plays written by schoolmasters with a view to improving their pupils' Latin, indoctrinating them with good morals, and (often enough) improving speech and gesture and 'audacity' by private performance before masters and parents. It includes the plays written at both universities, one in Greek (John Christopherson's *Jepthes*), most in Latin, and a very few- and these nearly all comedies- in English'. [F. P. Wilson, *The English Drama, 1485-1585*, ed. by G. K. Hunter (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), pp. 85-6.]

² For example, in Cambridge in 1586-7 the steward's accounts of Trinity record a payment of thirty shillings 'to the Quenes Men at Midsomer', which may have been for a performance in the college. [REED: *Cambridge*, ed. by Alan H. Nelson, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1989), I, p. 319.] There are a number of early references to visits by professional players to colleges in Oxford and Cambridge. For example, Elliott notes that Magdalen College 'played host to travelling companies of players and musicians, receiving visits from Princess Mary's players in 1530 and Queen Catherine's players in 1531'. He adds that although 'one is never quite certain whether such mentions of 'players' in the accounts refer to actors or musicians, [...] I think Princess Mary's players were probably actors, as they are called *mimi*'. [John R. Elliott Jr, 'Drama at the Oxford Colleges and the Inns of Court, 1520 and 1534', in John C. Coldewey, 'English Drama in the 1520s: Six Perspectives', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 31 (1992), 64-66 (p. 64).] There may also be a payment to a professional company in the accounts of Magdalen for 1575-6. The Rough Accounts include a payment of 'xxs' to 'Magistro Lilly pro Histrionibus Comitibus Leicestriae'. [R. E. Alton, 'The Academic Drama in Oxford: Extracts from the Records of Four Colleges', *Malone Society: Collections*, V (Oxford: Oxford University, 1958 [1960]), p. 60].

³ *Apollo Shroving*, written by schoolmaster William Hawkins for performance by his students at Hadleigh Grammar school in 1626, is a vernacular play; and in Oxford Richard Edwardes' English play, *Damon and Pythias* was performed at Merton College in 1567-8. W. M. Hawkins, *Apollo Shroving*, ed. by Howard Garrett Rhoads (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1936), p. 1. Richard Edwardes', *Damon and Pythias*, ed. by D. Jerry White (New York and London: Garland, 1980), p. 7.

⁴ William Tydeman, *Four Tudor Comedies* (London: Penguin, 1984), p. 17.

of students. Ralph Radcliffe's decision to exercise his pupils at Hitchin in the performance of Latin plays in the 1550s was implicitly based upon these pedagogical assumptions, as his friend, John Bale recorded: Radcliffe was 'accustomed every year to give "merry and honest plays for the edification of the public, both to practise his charges in ease of bearing and to teach them to speak clearly and elegantly".'⁵

Similarly, when John Brinsley published his textbook for schools, *Ludus Literarius* (1612), he urged the study of Terence, sharing the view of German pedagogue Melanchthon that 'no other author will teach the boys to speak Latin with equal purity, or train them to a style which will stand them in better stead'.⁶ Charles Hoole recommended a similar course of study in his later textbook, advising teachers that 'when you meet with an act or scene [of Terence] that is full of affection and action, you may cause some of your scholars - after they have learned it - to act it first in private amongst themselves, and afterwards in the open school before their fellows'.⁷

Thomas Heywood wrote of the educational merit of university play performances in his *Apology for Actors* (1612):

In the time of my residence in *Cambridge*, I have seen Tragedyes, Comedyes, Historyes, Pastorall and Shewes, publicly acted, in which Graduates of good place and reputation, have bene specially parted: this is held necessary for the emboldening of their Iunior Schollers, to arme them with audacity, against they come to be imployed in any publicke exercise.⁸

The educational value of the content of classical plays was a more controversial topic. Some academics advocated selective study of authors such as Terence at school level, deeming the matter of the plays occasionally unsuitable for youths. In the address to the reader prefacing the *Terentius Christianus* of Cornelius Schonaeus the editor stated, 'that for boys only that which is pure is becoming (as Lily, the eminent English grammarian says). The style of Terence is pure, but the matter is very often the opposite'. As Watson notes, Schonaeus 'on

⁵ Translated from John Bale by Harold Newcomb Hillebrand in *The Child Actors: A Chapter in Elizabethan Stage History* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), pp. 18-9.

⁶ Foster Watson, *The English Grammar Schools to 1660: Their Curriculum and Practice* (London: Frank Cass, 1968), p. 323.

⁷ Cited M. St. Clare Byrne, *Elizabethan Life in Town and Country*, 3rd edn (London: Methuen, 1925; repr. 1943), p. 196.

⁸ Cited in Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1970), p. 70.

this account [...] endeavoured to clothe in the phrase and elegance of Terence the old Bible stories'.⁹

Performances of classical drama were not necessarily promoted or allowed purely on educational grounds. Students might be called on to entertain local dignitaries or visiting royals. In these instances the skilful performance of an academic play was a way of complimenting the audience and a way of publicizing the quality of a school and its scholars.

The occasion of many private academic performances may reveal another reason for tolerating student play productions. Large-scale school and university productions were often mounted at holiday times (e.g. Christmas), periods traditionally associated with release from normal rules and routines. Implicitly, drama was serving a recreative, as well as an educative function, allowing students 'some outlet for high spirits', as had earlier festive rituals (such as Boy Bishop ceremonies). For students staying at school or college during the Christmas holidays, seasonal play performances also provided occupation and a channel for their energies, and thus a way of avoiding boredom and idle misbehaviour. At the same time, as collective exercises, play performances provided a means of fostering community spirit amongst the student body.

I

The Rise of Academic Drama in the Schools and Colleges of Renaissance England

As Boas notes, university drama was 'essentially a creation of the Renaissance age. Its tentative beginnings during the Medieval period, and its sporadic survivals after the Restoration' forming the 'prologue and epilogue to its main history'.¹⁰ There were dramatic or pseudo-dramatic performances in the two universities in the Medieval period by students and visiting performers, but they were rare.¹¹

⁹ Watson, *The English Grammar Schools*, p. 322.

¹⁰ Frederick S. Boas, *University Drama in the Tudor Age* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1914), p. 1.

¹¹ Students from a number of colleges participated 'in the extraordinary series of mumblings and disguisings known in different forms as the Feast of Fools, the Boy Bishops, the Christmas Prince, the Lord of Misrule, and the like'. References to wholly dramatic entertainments are also found: for example, a miracle play appears to have been produced in the college hall of Magdalen College, Oxford in 1506-7. [Boas, *University Drama*, pp. 3-4.]

However, John R. Elliott Jr describes how even in the 1520s dramatic activity remained limited at Oxford: 'there is not a lot to be said about Oxford drama in this period. Whether this is mainly due to lack of evidence, or mainly because little was in fact happening in Oxford, is not easy to decide.' [Elliott, 'Drama at the Oxford Colleges', p. 64.] In Cambridge this decade witnessed the first establishment of 'the pattern of dramatic performance which was to prevail in the 1580s and beyond'. [Alan H. Nelson, 'Drama in the 1520s: Cambridge University' in John C. Coldewey, 'English Drama in the 1520s: Six Perspectives', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 31 (1992), 67-8 (p. 67).]

Play-acting in schools, likewise, flourished in the sixteenth century.¹² 'Throughout Western Europe in the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance, groups of grammar school students and choir boys performed plays in addition to pursuing their studies [...] and religious devotions'.¹³ The dramatic activity of children in the sixteenth century and early seventeenth centuries was not without earlier precedents. Indeed, according to Hillebrand, the people of Renaissance England would have been 'thoroughly familiar from early times with the spectacle of children acting in public capacities that were wholly or in part dramatic'.¹⁴ From the earliest days of the Medieval era schoolboys and choristers were employed as performers, 'participating in mystery cycles and semi-dramatic forms of entertainment such as boy bishop ceremonies'.¹⁵

¹² Play performances (particularly of classical or neo-classical works) could be part of school exercises, as at Shrewsbury School. These performances are likely to have been staged without any extended or special preparations (e.g. costumes, props and a stage were probably not used). In other schools, statutes call for the special performance of plays on an annual basis. These productions appear to have been grander events and were often staged on holiday occasions (such as Christmas). Performances at times of traditional revelry appear to have been common in schools across the country. Indeed, the evidence of provincial records suggests that pupils were often invited to give performances elsewhere during festive periods (e.g. the Children of Totnes and their schoolmaster were paid for a performance at Christmas in 1565-6 at Plymouth, and a performance by 'some of the secundaris and choristers with other youthes' in Exeter was recorded as occurring at the 'End of all saintes'). [John Wasson, ed., *REED: Devon* (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1986), p. 237 and p. 192.]

Visits by important guests (e.g. royalty, nobles, local civic dignitaries) were also a common occasion for play performances. Queen Elizabeth was entertained with plays when she visited Westminster School in the 1560s, and in 1575-6 at Ludlow the corporation rewarded 'the childerne or schollers' for performing a play 'afore vs and oure bretherne.' [T. H. Vail Motter, *The School Drama in England* (London: Longmans, 1929), p. 91. J. Alan B. Somerset, ed., *REED: Shropshire*, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1994), I, p. 84.] The knowledge that they could be called on to provide such entertainment may have provided some schoolmasters with another reason to exercise their pupils dramatically.

In early Elizabethan London the grammar school and chorister troupes defended playing as a necessary preparation for the court performances which they were frequently invited to give (especially at Christmas). Even when the choristers of Paul's and the Chapel Royal were playing on a commercial basis they continued to advance this argument in defence of their activities. When William Hunnis took over the lease of the first Blackfriars playhouse the Earl of Leicester wrote to Sir William More, the owner of the property, explaining that 'Mr Hunnys' who 'hath of late bought of ffarantes widdowe her lease of that house in blackfryers wch you made to her husband diseased and meanes ther to practise the Queenes children of the Chappell, being nowe in his chardge, in like sort as his predecessor did for the better trayning them to do her Maiestie service'. [Hillebrand, p. 91.]

¹³ Michael Shapiro, *Children of the Revels: The Boy Companies of Shakespeare's Time and Their Plays* (New York: Columbia University, 1977), p. 2.

¹⁴ Hillebrand, p. 9.

¹⁵ Shapiro, p. 2.

Academic drama: The Evidence

Evidence of the growing popularity and frequency of play performances in Elizabethan and Jacobean academic institutions is mainly preserved in surviving school and college records.¹⁶ Detailed lists of school and college expenditure upon plays survive in some instances, recording the preparation of a stage, costumes and props. The account books of Christ's College, Oxford contain a long list of payments relating to the plays prepared for the entertainment of Alasco, Prince Palatine, in 1583. Similarly, at Westminster School a list of expenses relating to a performance of a play called *Sapientia Solomonis* in 1565-6 survives. This includes details of props and costumes provided for the performance such as 'a haddocke' and a 'drawing' of 'the city and temple of Jerusalem'. Detailed records of this sort usually only survive from larger schools and colleges.¹⁷

Other sources can provide further evidence about dramatic activity in schools and colleges. For example, a number of schools' statutes call for the performance of plays (or parts of plays), providing implicit evidence of dramatic activity even when no references to the performances themselves survive. At Shrewsbury, Thomas Ashton, the headmaster famous for the plays he produced himself in Shrewsbury's 'quarry', drew up a set of school ordinances which included one requiring that the senior boys 'declame and plaie one acte of a comedie' every week'.¹⁸ Other statutes call for annual performances: the 36th statute (1580) of the The Free Grammar School of Sandwich required that 'at everie Christmas time, if the Master doe thinke mete, to have one Comedie or Tragedie of chaste matter in Latin to be played, the parts to be divided to as many scholars as may be, and to be learned at vacant

¹⁶ In seeking to reconstruct a picture of dramatic activity in the schools and colleges of Renaissance England, we are confronted by the same problems faced when exploring regional dramatic activity more generally in the period: evidence is limited and sometimes ambiguous. Many school and college records have been lost or are incomplete, and dramatic activity is not always easily identified. In college account books we find payments for shows as well as plays, for example, but the distinction between the two is not always clear (e.g. at Jesus College, Cambridge in 1564-5 'xij d.' was paid for 'twoo Torches for the diologge and shewe in Christmas'.) [Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 245.] Moore Smith suggests that there was a difference between plays and shows: the 'distinction perhaps lay in this - that "a show" represented the medieval tradition of a disguising, and a play followed the form more or less of ancient tragedy or comedy'. [G. C. Moore Smith, *College Plays Performed in the University of Cambridge* (London: Cambridge University, 1923), pp. 39-40.]

¹⁷ There may be more information about performances in larger schools such as Westminster because the plays they performed were produced on a more lavish scale than those typically staged in provincial grammar schools (e.g. keeping accounts may have been more important because greater sums of money were involved). [Mottet, p. 92.] Likewise, more detailed dramatic records probably survive from the larger and wealthier colleges because they spent more money upon drama and organised more lavish play performances.

¹⁸ Boas, *University Drama in the Tudor Age*, p. 40.

times'.¹⁹ At Eton, William Malim's *Consuetudinarium* (c 1560-3) made provision for annual play performances:

Circiter festum Diui Andrea Ludimagister eligere solet pro suo arbitrio scaeneas fabulas optimas & quam accomodatissimas quas pueri feriis Natalitijs subsequentibus non sine ludorum elegancia populo spectante publice. aliquando peragant, Histrionum leuis ars est ad actionem tamen oratorum & gestum motumque corporis decentem tantopere facit vt nihil magis. Interdum etiam exhibet Anlico sermone contextas fabulas quoe habeant acumen & leporem.²⁰

Similarly, at Westminster the Elizabethan statutes called for the annual performance of a Latin and an English play at Christmas.²¹

At Cambridge university, the statutes of Queen's College (1546-7), 'required students to participate in comedies and tragedies, two per year as dictated in the fully revised statutes of 1558-9'; and in 1559-60 Trinity College 'formalized its practice of performing five plays annually'.²² That there was a tradition of performing plays at Christ Church College, Oxford also finds confirmation in a college statute relating to their funding. In 1554-5 the Dean and Chapter agreed that 'ther shalbe nomore allowed yerely towarde the charges of the Pastyme in Christmas and the Plays of the costes of the Churche but for two comedies xxs a pece, And for two tragdies xls a playe.'²³

¹⁹ Motter, p. 226.

²⁰ *REED: Buckinghamshire*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston, forthcoming.

²¹ The Westminster statute of 1560 reads: ' Quo iuventus majori cum fructo tempus Natalis Christi teret et tum actioni tum pronunciationi decenti melius se assuescat, statuimus ut singulis annis intra duodecim post festum Natali Christi dies vel postea arbitrio Decani Ludimagister et Praeceptor simul Latine unam, magister Choristarum Anglice alteram comoediam aut tragoediam a discipulis et choristis in Aula privatim vel publice agendam curent'. [Motter, p. 86.]

Not all school statutes or records of play performances specify the language of the plays performed. This can make it difficult to know whether performances were in Latin or the vernacular. However, the terminology used can provide indirect evidence of the play's language: for example, those which are described as 'interludes' would usually be plays in English.

²² Alan H. Nelson, ed., *REED: Cambridge*, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto 1989), II, p. 712.

²³ Although the order represents a reduction in college funding for play performances it reveals that playing was customary and that the college expected plays to continue being performed. [*REED: Oxford University*, ed. by John Elliott Jr, forthcoming.]

Other evidence for school-boy playing is provided by payments or references to school troupes in provincial civic and churchwardens' records. In Coventry in 1622, for example, record was made in the Town Chamberlain and Wardens' accounts of a payment 'to Iohn Rogerson and Iohn Baker late Wardens which they paid to the Schoole Masters of the ffree schoole the last yere both at the visitation xls. and at the Comedy xxs'. [*REED: Coventry*, ed. by R. W. Ingram (London: Manchester University; Toronto, Buffalo: Toronto University, 1981), p. 415.] Similarly, in 1623 Maldon's corporation paid '2s. 2d' for 'wine and sugar given to Mr Daynes and other gentlemen

In some instances, contemporary accounts or allusions provide additional information about play performances by students as well. There are, for example, a number of descriptions of the play performed before Queen Elizabeth in King's College chapel during her 1564 visit to Cambridge.

Changing Attitudes to Academic Drama

Although academic drama flourished in the mid-sixteenth century with the support of most academics, views about the role and acceptability of student acting were more mixed by the end of the century. Student drama continued to have many supporters and many plays were performed in the universities and in schools across the country. Similarly, when King James authorised the five-mile prohibition of professional players and other 'Idle' games at Cambridge in 1603-4 he explicitly excepted the activities of the students: 'Provided, that it is not our pleasure, (and meaning) hereby <to abridge the stud>entes of their accustomed exercises in any kind whatsoeuer within their seuerall colledges.' ²⁴

There were, however, a growing number of critics of student acting, particularly in the universities, as puritan thinking grew in influence at Oxford and Cambridge. Such critics began to challenge the pedagogical case for tolerating and encouraging students to perform plays. One of the most famous opponents of student acting in the late sixteenth century was John Rainolds. He engaged in a 'prolonged pamphleteering duel on the subject of academic

when his scholars did last act a comedy in the grammar schole'. [A. Clark, 'Maldon Records and the Drama', *Notes and Queries*, 8 (1907), 43-4 (p. 44).] As Collinson notes 'there are references in the Canterbury Chapter *Acta* to payments for the "setting forth of interludes" by the scholars of the grammar school (1561) and to the "setting forth of tragedies, comedies and interludes" (1562)' as well. [Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 70-1.]

Unfortunately, civic and ecclesiastic records do not always state the place of the plays performed. Although schoolhouses may be the likely venue for such productions it cannot be assumed that this was the case. Not all schools had a distinct schoolhouse and other performance places are recorded, particularly for civic sponsored performances. There are a number of references to school-boy troupes entertaining local corporations with plays staged in the town hall or an equivalent civic space (e.g. in York in 1585 'xls.' was paid to 'Iohn pullen skollers which playd in the common hall in Ianuary 1584', and in Coventry in 1600 a payment was made to 'mr. Tovie, for his scolers playing A tragidie Acted at Maister maiors house'). [REED: *York*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, 2 vols, (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto; London: Manchester University, 1979), I, p. 418. Ingram, p. 356.]

²⁴ Nelson, REED: *Cambridge*, I, p.396.

One of academic drama's most famous defenders was William Gager, playwright and member of Christ Church. He denied that student performers were to be classified alongside professional actors: 'I denye that we are to be termed *scenici* or *histriones*, for aiminge on the stage once a yeere, or twoe yeere, sevene, ten, or sometyme twentye yeeres. As he is not a wrastler, that sometyme to prove his strenthe, tryethe for a fall or two'. [Cited in Boas, *University Drama*, p. 396.]

performances with Gager at the end of the century'.²⁵ He was particularly critical of students dressing up as women (e.g. in performances such as that of *Ulysses Redux* at Christ Church, Oxford in 1592), although he himself had played a woman's role in a college play while a student.²⁶

Criticism of student drama was not confined to puritan academics. Stephen Gosson in his *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* (1590) did not exempt academic drama from his attack on theatre as a tool of the devil: 'So subtile is the deuill, that vnder the colour of recreation in London, and of exercise of learning, in the vniuersities, by seeing of playes, he maketh vs to ioyne with the Gentiles in their corruption'.²⁷ Similarly, when William Prynne wrote his wholesale polemic against the theatre (*HistrioMastix*, 1633) he was keen to undermine the idea that the universities supported drama and was overtly critical of those colleges continuing to allow plays and of the students involved.²⁸

However, while play production appears to have gradually ceased at some university colleges (e.g. no performances are recorded after 1567-8 at Christ's College, Cambridge which 'eventually became the most puritan college in Cambridge'), the voices of the critics did not immediately prevail more generally. Many colleges and schools continued to stage plays during the Jacobean period. Indeed, colleges such as Trinity and Queen's at Cambridge and Christ Church at Oxford continued to be dramatically active even in the Caroline era.²⁹

²⁵ Boas, *University Drama*, p. 232.

²⁶ This was a standard criticism of theatre advanced by Puritan opponents. They argued that it transgressed the Biblical injunction that, 'the woman shall not wear that which pertaineth to a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abominations unto the lord thy God' - Deuteronomy, 22:5. [Cited in Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 1242.]

²⁷ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 847.

²⁸ 'Our Vniuersities though they tolerate and connive at, yet they give no publicke approbation to these private Enterludes, which are not generally received into all colledges, but onely practiced in some private houses, (perchance once in three or foure yeeres) and that by the particular statutes of those houses made in times of popery, which required some Latine comedies, for learning-sake onely, to bee acted now and then'. [Prynne, cited in Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 856.]

²⁹ It is worth noting that at Oxford some of the performances staged as royal entertainments in the Caroline period were not performed by the scholars, though mounted in college. This appears to have been true of the three plays staged to entertain King Charles and Queen Henrietta-Maria at Christ Church, Oxford in 1636, as Elliott notes: 'Oxford scholars had virtually nothing to do with the presentation of these plays, except for the writing of them [...]. Instead, the names that appear in the accounts are nearly all those of professional musicians, actors, scenic designers, haberdashers, wig-makers, and the like'. [John R. Elliott Jr, 'Plays at Christ Church in 1636: A New Document', *Theatre Notebook*, 39 (1985), 7-13 (p. 8).] This may have been prompted by the demands of the court or could evidence a growing tendency for scholars to eschew performing themselves.

Caroline school performances are, likewise, recorded (e.g. the pupils at Hadleigh Grammar School performed *Apollo Shroving* in 1626).³⁰

II

Professional Play performances in Schools and University Colleges

Professional Performance in Schools

The licences issued to Elizabethan and Jacobean professional troupes authorising them to travel as players often cite school houses as one of the public buildings corporations might allow them to use for their performances. The 1617-8 patent for the Children of the Royal Chamber of Bristol required all regional officials to 'permitt and suffer Martin Slatier Iohn Edmonds & Nathaniell Clay [...] to play as aforsaid (As her Maiesties seruants of her Royal Chamber of Bristoll) in all Playhowses Townehalls Schoolehouses and other places Convenient for yat purpose' (own emphasis).³¹

As one of the few public (or semi-public) buildings to be found in many towns, school houses lent themselves to use as performance venues. Most schools contained at least one large room or hall capable of accommodating a gathering of people.³² Some school buildings incorporated a yard potentially available for performance use as well, as at the Free School in Bristol. 'Excavations at the site indicate that a courtyard / playground existed' at the school during the late sixteenth century.³³ [See plate 18a]

While professional troupes may have preferred to perform in town halls or churches, where available, performances at schools evidently occurred. The Queen's players may have performed at Winchester College in 1568-9, for instance, the College rewarding them with five shillings.³⁴ An apparently professional theatrical performance is recorded at the schoolhouse in Lyme Regis in 1606-7 as well. The churchwardens reported that the Mayor had given 'Leaue vnto Certaine Enterlude players to playe in a scoole howse adioyninge vnto the church being within the Compasse of the Church yerd'.³⁵

³⁰ Hawkins, *Apollo Shroving*, p. 1. Hereafter all references to this play will appear in the text.

³¹ *REED: Bristol*, ed. by Mark C. Pilkinton (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1997), p. 209.

³² In some cases, the school was limited to this single chamber.

³³ Mark C. Pilkinton, 'Entertainment at the free school of St. Bartholomew, Bristol', *REED: Newsletter*, 13:2 (1988), 9-13 (p. 12).

³⁴ Jane Cowling, 'An Edition of the Records of Drama, Ceremony and Secular Music in Winchester City and College, 1556-1642' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Southampton, 1993), p. 62.

³⁵ *REED: Dorset and Cornwall*, ed. by Rosalind Conklin Hays and C. E. McGee, Sally L. Joyce and

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Implicit evidence of school house performances is found in the corporation Minute Book of Newark (Notts). In Michaelmas 1568 an order was passed in which it was agreed that ‘no players from hensf[o]rth shall playe in the scole house but onelie suche as shalbe<.> permitted and licenced there to playe by Thalderman for the tyme beinge at suche tyme as the same alderman and assistants shalbe [the<.>re] present them selves.’³⁶ By implication, plays had been staged in the school house in the past and were expected to be staged there in the future. The order simply regulates the staging of plays in the school, only authorising them if staged before the alderman and his assistants. Performances are likely to have been mounted in the school’s large hall. The hall which is partly overhung by ‘a timber-framed room’ survives to the present. It is known as ‘Tudor Hall’ and is used as part of the Newark District Council Museum [see plate 19].³⁷

A similar regulatory order passed by Boston’s corporation in 1578 suggests that Boston’s school was likewise used as a playing venue by professional performers (see plate 18b). On 20th March it was agreed ‘that there shalbe no mo players nor interludes [...] in the church nor in the Chauncell nor in the hall nor scolle howse’.³⁸ The order’s application to several venues suggests that it was aimed at curbing professional rather than academic play performances, while the use of the phrase “no more” implies that all of the places listed had been used for performances in the past.

As the latter example reveals permission to perform in school houses was not necessarily readily or easily obtained in some towns. There is, however, little evidence of people campaigning against the staging of professional play performances in school houses in the early modern period.

Evelyn S. Newlyn (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1999), p. 218.

³⁶ Nottingham, Nottinghamshire Archive, Newark Corporation Minutes, 1550-1636, memoranda, fol. 45. [Transcribed from a copy of folio 45 held at the REED office, Toronto.]

³⁷ The grammar school was founded in 1529 and built in 1632. [*The Buildings of England: Nottinghamshire*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner, revised by Elizabeth Williamson, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 1951; repr. 1979), p. 194.]

³⁸ Stanley J. Kahrl, ed., ‘Records of Plays and Players in Lincolnshire, 1300-1585’, Malone Society: Collections, VIII (Oxford: Oxford University, 1969 [1974]), p. 5.

In this instance the town may have been especially keen to restrict play performances in the school house because they wished to protect what was a relatively new building from damage. The school was apparently erected in 1567 at a cost of £190 11d. [Information kindly provided by L. J. Rich, Bursar, Boston Grammar School.]

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Professional Performances in University Colleges

There is some evidence of professional companies visiting the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period. When the Queen's Men were rewarded 'at Midsomer' in 1586-7 by Trinity College, Cambridge, it was possible that they were being paid for a performance.³⁹ At Oxford in 1575-6 Madgalen College paid twenty shillings 'pro Histrionib[us] Comit[is] Leicestriae'.⁴⁰ In neither instance is it certain that the players were being paid for playing, but it is possible that the rewards were for performing.

More tenuous evidence of college performances by professional players emerges from other sources. In Jonson's Epistle to *Volpone*, he implies that the play was performed at both the Universities, presumably by the King's Men. He dedicated the play 'To the Most Noble and Most Equal Sisters, The Two Famous Universities For Their Love and Acceptance Shown to His Poem In The Presentation'. However, as Alan Nelson points out, supporting evidence is not to be found.⁴¹ A similar case is presented by the claim made in the title-page of the 1603 quarto of *Hamlet*: 'THE Tragicall Historie of/ HAMLET/ Prince of Denmark/ By William Shakespeare/ As it hath beene diverse times acted by his Highnesse ser/vants in the Citties of London, as also in the two/ Vniversities of Cambridge and Oxford and elsewhere'.⁴² The allusion to performances in the Universities suggests that the play was performed within university colleges but there is no firm evidence of the play being performed in the records of either university.⁴³

³⁹ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 319.

⁴⁰ Elliott, *REED: Oxford University*, forthcoming.

⁴¹ Ben Jonson, *Volpone*, ed. by Alvin B. Kernan (London and New Haven: Yale University, 1962; repr. 1967), p. 27.

'The Records [...] provide no evidence for a Cambridge performance [...]. Perhaps the dedication expresses a hope that the printed book now offered for the judgement of the Universities will have a good reception'. [Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, pp. 985-6.]

⁴² Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, pp. 984-5.

⁴³ Nelson states that: 'In view of the many prohibitions at Cambridge, including the Privy Council letter of 29 July 1593 and various payments to companies in lieu of performance, it may be questioned whether the lord chamberlain's players would have been permitted to play even though they did visit Cambridge in 1594-5: the claim of the title-page, not repeated in subsequent editions, may be a printer's groundless boast. Even conceding that the town may have been reluctant to pay out 40s for non-performance and that the amount therefore may imply a performance, the connection of *Hamlet* to a performance in 1594-5 must remain doubtful'. [Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 985.]

A different complication is presented by Henry Jackson's account of the King's Men's performances of *The Alchemist* and *Othello* in 1610. Jackson was a member of Corpus Christi College, Oxford and wrote briefly about the performances in a letter (written in Latin) dated September, 1610. 'Extracts from it were transcribed 50 years later by another Corpus Christi man, William Fulman'. [Gamini Salgado, *Eyewitnesses of Shakespeare* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1975), p. 30.] The account is generally trusted but the location of the performances is unclear. Jackson's terminology is ambiguous. He describes the King's Men's use of 'pleno theatro', 'theatro

That there should be few records of professional players performing in college halls is unsurprising. The general antipathy of the University authorities towards professional players is well-known. This aversion manifested itself in the regulations passed in both towns prohibiting performances by professional players within the immediate precincts of the Universities. At Oxford, the Earl of Leicester, as Chancellor,

confirmed the University's ban on 'common stage players' in 1584 saying in a letter that he thought 'the prohibition of common stage players very requisite', though he would not like to see academic plays by students themselves banned. This ban was renewed in 1593, in the form of a letter from the Privy Council to the Vice-Chancellor and Masters of the colleges. It was signed by both Cecils and others, including Essex and Charles Howard. The message was to be passed on to the mayor of Oxford to ensure that the ban was held for a five mile radius around Oxford.⁴⁴

The Cambridge authorities sought to enforce a similar five-mile prohibition from as early as 1568-9. However, as at Oxford, 'the principle of the prohibition was a letter from the Privy Council dated 30 October 1575, in which the university was granted unusual powers to guarantee public order, to suppress distractions which might entice the students from their studies, and to protect the whole community from the plague'.⁴⁵

nostro' and 'apud nos'. As Tillotson notes: 'These seem to imply something better than a yard and certainly state that there was more than one place recognised as available for players'. [Geoffrey Tillotson, '“Othello” and “The Alchemist” at Oxford in 1610', in *Essays in Criticism and Research* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1942), 41-5 (p. 44).] It cannot be ruled out that the performances were given in a college hall but it is more likely that the company performed either in the town hall or a local inn.

⁴⁴ Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), p. 164.

⁴⁵ As Gurr records: 'As playgoing became more and more popular, both universities tried to stop students from going to plays.' [Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 164.]

The opposition of the universities to performances by professional players in their towns was prompted by a number of concerns. In part their aversion to professional players was ethical. Professional acting was viewed as a base trade and its practitioners were seen as peddlers of immoral, potentially corrupting entertainment. [Their description as 'common' players hints at this social and ethical contempt.] However, in opposing public stage plays the universities were also apparently motivated by more general concerns about social order and public health. Consequently, players were not the only people subject to their scrutiny and regulation. Mallett places the Oxford legislation against plays in its wider context of concerns about disorder in the town: 'The year 1584, which saw a decree directed against professional players in university precincts, was marked by a series of fresh complaints from the Chancellor against University disorders. We hear again of looseness in Apparel, of incivilities at meetings of the Masters, of the abuse of dispensations and the neglect of lectures.' [C. E. Mallett, *A History of the University of Oxford*, II (London: Methuen, 1924), p. 145]. Similarly, in Cambridge, the university acted not only against players, but 'games at the Gog Magog hills (1572-3, 1573-4, 1619-20)' and 'bear-baiting and plays at

Students were also threatened with punishment if they attended common plays. At Oxford the 1584 statute ordered that 'it shall not be lawfull for anye master bachiler or scholler aboue the age of eightene to repaire or go to see anye such thinge vnder paine of imprisonment'. For any undergraduate under the age of eighteen the penalty was 'open punishment in St Maries Church accordinge to the discrecion of the vicehauncellor or Proctors'.⁴⁶

However, the passing of the prohibitions did not prevent professional troupes from visiting or acting in the towns. Nor were academics prevented from attending public performances. Henry Jackson suggests that the audiences for the King's Men's performances in Oxford in 1610 included many men from the university. He alludes to '*Theologos nostros, qui (pudet dicere) avidissime confluebant*'. As Tillotson notes: 'These theologians may be students merely or may include D.D.s. [...] But whatever the audience for *The Alchemist*, the tragedies were almost certainly attended by Jackson, and if by Jackson, then by the University at large, excepting extreme Puritans. [...] It would seem, that no one paid attention to the University statute of 1584 which forbade this attendance'.⁴⁷ As was often the case in the period, the introduction of legislation cannot be equated with its observation or enforcement.⁴⁸

III

i -Provincial Schools and School Drama

There was a proliferation of educational establishments in sixteenth century England, grammar schools in particular. There were as many as 359 grammar schools by 1577 'when William Harrison remarked in his description of England that nearly every corporate town had at least one grammar school'.⁴⁹ The proliferation of schools and the demand for their establishment in towns across the country reflects the increased importance apparently placed upon education in the period.⁵⁰ As O'Day notes, 'Renaissance scholars saw in education on

Chesterton (1580-1, 1589-90, 1591-2)'. [Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 723.]

⁴⁶ Elliott, *REED: Oxford University*, forthcoming.

⁴⁷ Tillotson, p. 43.

⁴⁸ The town authorities even rewarded companies for performances after the passing of the legislation (e.g. in Oxford in 1586 the Earl of Essex's Men were rewarded for performing in the 'gild hall'). [H. E. Salter, ed., *Oxford Council Acts, 1583-1626* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1928), p. 26.] Similarly, in Cambridge, Queen Anne's Men were granted 'absolute authoritye to playe [in] the Towne Hall' by 'master maior' in 1605-6. [Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 725.]

⁴⁹ Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation: Protestantism, Patronage, and Playing in Tudor England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993), p. 105.

⁵⁰ The increase in schools in the later sixteenth century was perhaps partly prompted by 'the desire to supply the place of the older dissolved schools' of pre-Reformation times as well. [Foster Watson, *The Old Grammar Schools* (London: Frank Cass, 1968), p. 47.] The indirect role of the Reformation in inspiring the mid-sixteenth century fashion for founding or endowing grammar schools is described further by Watson: 'The spirit which led rich men to endow by will Chantries

classical lines a way to improve society'. However, 'the rise in the number of schools in the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods [...] was not sudden, nor was it entirely due to the impact of the Renaissance conviction that gentlemen must be properly educated to serve the state. Some schools in England and Wales undoubtedly bore the imprint of Renaissance humanist theory, but many more continued in the tradition of earlier centuries, serving the utilitarian requirements of their patrons and absorbing such of this attitude to education as was appropriate to this task.' ⁵¹

Not all those schools growing or established in the Renaissance were grammar schools (e.g. contemporary references are made to reading schools, writing schools, and 'petty' schools - the 'feeder' schools for the grammar establishments).⁵² A number of choral schools flourished in the Elizabethan period as well. In many cases the choral schools of the Renaissance represented a continuation of pre-Reformation Song schools. Typically affiliated to a cathedral, the primary aim of these schools was the training of boys for cathedral service; and their main activities were musical and devotional. However, chorister troupes might receive some academic training as well and are known to have performed plays occasionally like their grammar school contemporaries.⁵³ Some grammar school pupils and choristers acted together. The grammar school boys and choristers of Wells performed together at least once in 1582-3. Record of their joint performance at Axbridge parish church is preserved in a complaint in the ecclesiastical courts:

forasmuche as it was obiected by the Chapter aforesaide to the Skolemaster of the Gramer Skoole of welles aforesaide That he did carrye with him the children of the Grammer skoole and the choristers of the saide *cathedral* church vnto Axbridge to playe in the *parishe* Church theare whiche he confesses, That thearefore the saide

in their own parish church, and to make provision for the chantry priest to teach grammar in it, gave way, in the Protestant scheme of public life, to the foundation or further endowment of a grammar school, in the successful man's birthplace.' [Watson, *The Old Grammar Schools*, p. 46.] The accuracy of this portrait is revealed by the records of schools founded in the Elizabethan period. Many were established by successful business people. The list of London citizens recorded by Stow as founding schools in his *Survey of London* included 'William Harper' (founded a grammar school at Bedford, 1562), 'Sir Thomas Gresham, mercer' (founded Gresham college, 1566), and 'Sir Wolston Dixie, skinner' (founded a school at Market Bosworth, 1586). [Watson, *The Old Grammar Schools*, p. 46.]

⁵¹ Rosemary O'Day, *Education and Society, 1500-1800* (London: Longmans, 1982), p. 25, p. 47.

⁵² There were different kinds of grammar school as well. Some were endowed schools, others were unendowed.

⁵³ Such was the popularity and success of the plays produced by two of the London choral schools (the choristers of St Paul's and the Chapel Royal) that they were able to begin performing plays on a commercial basis.

Skoolmaster the nexte Chapter daye shall come in to the Chapterhouse before the deane and Chapter [...] and submit himselfe to the Chapter in that behalf. ⁵⁴

Before looking in more detail at academic drama in grammar or choral schools, school play production needs to be placed in context. The following sections therefore provide an overview of the nature and functioning of the two kinds of school in the period.

ii- Grammar Schools

Renaissance England's many grammar schools varied greatly in size. School populations could be very small: 'Queen Elizabeth endowed a grammar school at Penryn, in Cornwall, for a Master there to teach three boys. Bath grammar school was founded (1553) for the education of 10 poor boys.' By contrast, Merchant Taylors' School, London, was 'planned for 250 boys' and 'at Shrewsbury the numbers at one time reached 360 and indeed later are said to have reached 600'. ⁵⁵

The location and nature of the buildings which housed England's schools were also various. ⁵⁶ Purpose-built houses were not used for all provincial grammar schools. Many were founded in, or made use of, existing buildings, including private houses (e.g. Stockport Grammar School was being held in 'the upper storey of a house belonging to the mercer Alexander Lowe in 1603'). Public buildings were used as well. In Newport, Essex, the grammar school founded in 1588 by Mistress Joyce Frankland was set up in the upper part of a house which had been given for 'public use as a Guildhall' in 1554. Similarly, in Thaxted the school was reportedly 'kept [...] in the old Guildhall from 1562 to 1711'. ⁵⁷

⁵⁴ REED: *Somerset*, ed. by James Stokes (with Robert J. Alexander), 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1996), I, p. 4.

⁵⁵ Watson, *The Old Grammar Schools*, pp. 118-9.

⁵⁶ Increasingly in the Elizabethan period, the establishment of schools was accompanied by the erection of a schoolhouse (e.g. when John Roysse funded the refoundation and endowment of Abingdon Grammar school in 1562-3 he provided 'fiftie pounds of lawfull money of England, to the intente that the said maior bailiffs and burgesses shall build or provide therewith one conveniente house within the said borough to be a schole house able to receive three score and three schollers'). [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Berkshire*, II, ed. by P. H. Ditchfield and William Page (London: Constable, 1907), p. 263.] Likewise, a number of towns whose local grammar school was established at an early date without provision for a schoolhouse invested in the erection or conversion of such an edifice in the latter part of the sixteenth century (e.g. in Boston, Queen Mary founded and endowed Boston grammar school in 1554 but its new school house was erected by the town in 1567). [Watson, *The Old Grammar Schools*, p. 114.]

⁵⁷ *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Essex*, II, ed. by William Page and J. Horace Round (London: Constable, 1907), p. 542, p. 554.

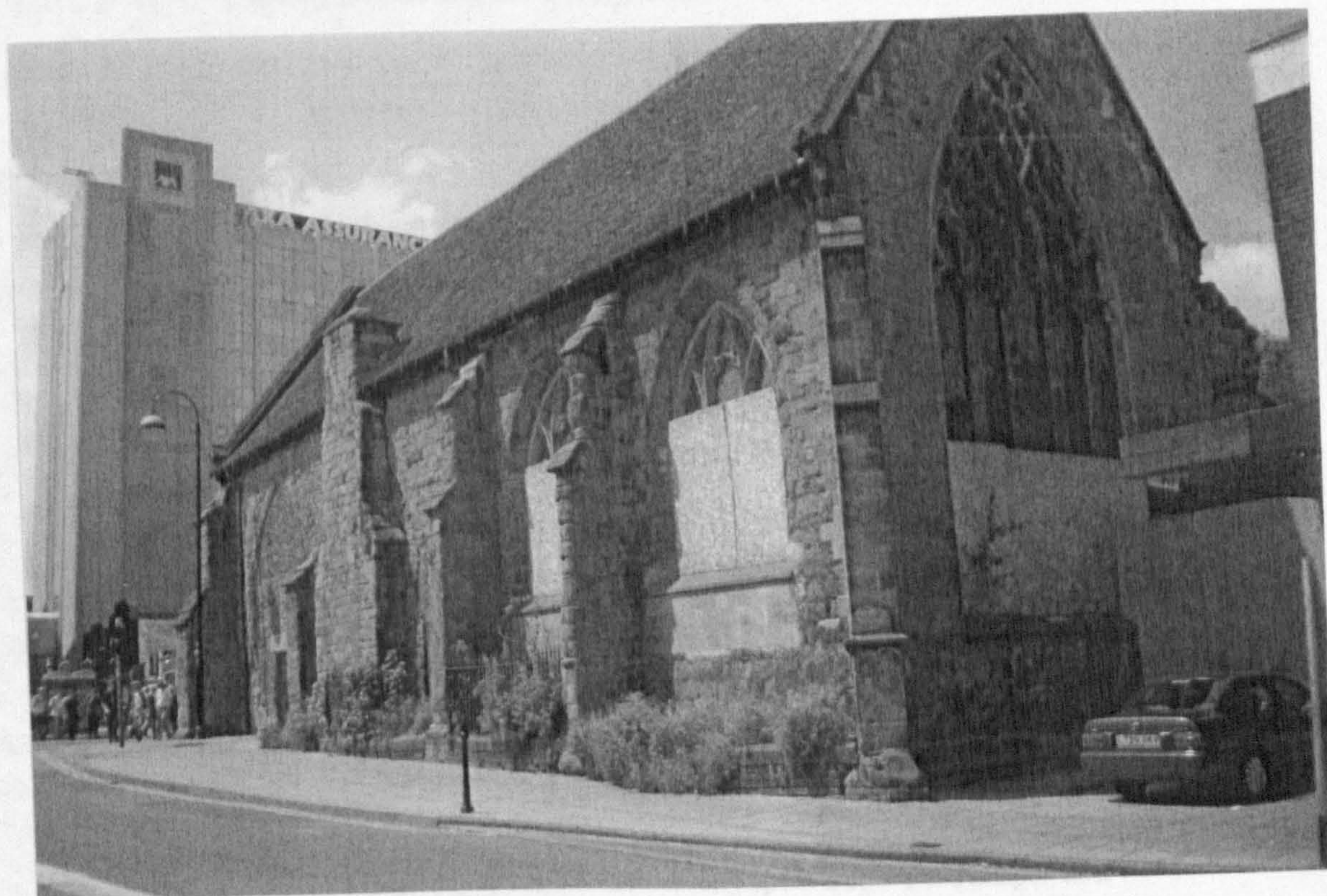


Plate 20: Exterior view of the old grammar school, Coventry
[Author's own photograph]

Even more frequent are references to schools being held in churches and chapels.⁵⁸ Ex-monastic properties housed many provincial schools as well. Ralph Radcliffe established his school at Hitchin in the town's dissolved Carmelite priory. In similar fashion, 'the refectory of the old monastery of Blackfriars' in Chelmsford 'which had been sold not long after the dissolution with the manor of Monksham to Thomas Mildmay [...] was rented from him as a schooolhouse for 40s. a year'.⁵⁹ A number of hospital buildings were also acquired for use as provincial grammar schools, paralleling the example of Christ's Hospital in London.⁶⁰

As this survey indicates, the venues for provincial grammar schools were diverse; their facilities were equally varied. While some schools were equipped with multiple rooms and a school hall, most provincial schools were simpler in the accommodation they afforded. In many schools there was only one schoolroom, although this might be of large dimensions (e.g. the 'Fermyre' converted for use as a grammar school in Bedford in 1562-3 appears to have included a schoolroom 80 feet in length).⁶¹ The 'Halls' used for play productions at Eton and Winchester colleges were, likewise, large, that at Eton measuring 82 feet by 32 feet, and the hall at Winchester measuring 63 feet in length.⁶² Schoolrooms and halls of such commodious dimensions would have lent themselves to occasional use as performance spaces. This does not mean that plays were confined to larger schools, however. Indeed,

⁵⁸ It is a convention alluded to in *Twelfth Night* when a joke is made about Malvolio being 'like a pedant that / keeps a school i' the church'. [William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, III. 2. 75 in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. by G. Blakemore Evans and others (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).] St. Bartholomew's School in Newbury appears to have been kept in a converted chapel, as a contemporary reported in the 1570s: 'The Chappell ys converted into a scholehouse in King Edward's time, and so hath contynewed sythence.' [Ditchfield and Page, *Berkshire*, II, p. 273.]

⁵⁹ Page and Round, *Essex*, II, pp. 511-2.

When William More granted Richard Farrant the lease on a similar ex-monastic property (the Old Buttery portion of the Blackfriars monastery in London) it appears to have been because he believed Farrant intended to use the property as a school for the Chapel children. Similarly, when Henry Evans took over the lease of the Blackfriars property in which James Burbage had created a theatre, he not only exercised the boys dramatically but apparently maintained a school in one part of the ex-monastic building.

⁶⁰ At Abingdon, for instance, the school was 'established [...] in a disused St. John's Hospital'. [Ditchfield and Page, *Berkshire*, II, p. 264.] A potentially more unusual venue for a school is recorded in the will of Michael Hipwell, of Stony Stratford (1 June, 1609). He directed that 'a public-house belonging to him, called the 'Rose and Crown', should be let for a term of 99 years, and at the expiration of the term he bequeathed the house, with all the barns, houses, and stables belonging to it to seven trustees and their heirs, to apply the profits to the maintenance of a schoolmaster, who was to keep a free grammar school in the barn behind the inn.' [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Buckinghamshire*, II, ed. by William Page (London: Constable, 1908), pp. 212-3.]

⁶¹ *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of Bedfordshire*, II, ed. by William Page (London: Constable, 1907), p. 231.

⁶² *The Buildings of England: Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner and David Lloyd (London: Penguin, 1967), p. 702.
Page, *Buckinghamshire*, II, p. 163.

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surviving evidence of academic performances and the assumed conventionality of schoolhouse performances by touring players suggests otherwise.

Pupils and Staff

As O' Day observes, 'there was no accepted school age', but pupils younger than six are rarely recorded.⁶³ Likewise, it was unusual for students to stay in school 'beyond the age of 14' unless they were planning to go to University.⁶⁴ School pupils were generally boys. At Harrow the rules (1590) 'expressly stated that "no girls shall be received to be taught in the school"'.⁶⁵ There were, however, exceptions: for example, at Bunbury Grammar School (founded 1594) 'girls were, by statute, to be admitted, but the number was limited, and none were to remain "above the age of nine, nor longer than they may learn to read English"'.⁶⁶

In some schools an education could be gained free of charge. Many of the 'Free Grammar schools' were originally established as institutions for the education of poor scholars and, therefore, did not necessarily exact entry or tuition fees. Eton was opened as 'a Free school to all coming to it from all parts of England', and schools such as Harrow made provision for a specified number of 'free scholars'.⁶⁷ In other instances pupils were routinely charged tuition (and, sometimes, maintenance) fees of varying amounts or an admission fee was exacted.⁶⁸

As these divergent charging systems indicate, the pupils of grammar schools could be drawn from various social backgrounds.⁶⁹ The student population of grammar schools could be equally varied with regards to their geographical origins. Some schools, like Winchester,

⁶³ O' Day, p. 62.

⁶⁴ Pupils might spend as long as six or seven years in school, but school careers could be much shorter. It was not unusual for students to 'to be sent to a number of schools in a short school life' either. [O' Day, p. 38, p. 57.]

⁶⁵ Watson, *The Old Grammar Schools*. p. 116.

⁶⁶ Watson, *The Old Grammar Schools*, p. 116.

⁶⁷ Page, *Buckinghamshire*, II, p. 161.

'The "free scholars" at Harrow were limited to 40, and might be rich or poor, provided they dwelt in the neighbourhood, preference being given to the latter'. [St. Clare Byrne, p. 181.]

⁶⁸ At Merchant Taylors' school 'a hundred free places were allotted to the sons of poor people, fifty places were kept for those whose parents could afford two shillings and six pence a quarter towards their maintenance, and a hundred more were open to the sons of the rich or others who could pay five shillings a quarter'. [St. Clare Byrne, p. 181.] At Sir John Deane's grammar school in Northwich the entry fee of '4d' was charged instead. [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Chester*, III, ed. by B. E. Harris (Oxford: Oxford University 1980) p. 245.]

⁶⁹ At Colchester Free Grammar School the admissions registers between 1637-1645 reveal a school population of mixed social background, although the absence of children from the poorest economic groups (husbandmen and labourers) is noticeable: Aristocrats, 31 %, Clergy/ Professional, 20%, Tradesmen, 37 %, Yeomen, 12 %, Husbandmen, 0 %, Labourers, 0 %. [Figures cited in O' Day, p. 37.]

made no provision for pupils from other parts of the country, but admission was not necessarily confined to children from the immediate locale of a school. Such was the reputation of some schools (e.g. Ashton's school at Shrewsbury) that children from further afield wished to apply for entry. In these cases, the number of 'foreign' students admitted might be limited to a specified number. At Shrewsbury school in 1562 there were '266 boys each of whom' had '*ali* or *op* against his name, standing for *alienus*, one who came from outside the town, and *oppidanus*, a town boy.' There were '133 of each'.⁷⁰

The size of grammar school staff, like student numbers, varied. The smallest schools were run by one master, while those of a slightly larger size might employ a number of masters and one or more junior teachers, known as ushers. Older students might also be used to teach the younger pupils. The largest schools would typically elect a headmaster and employ a number of other men as teachers (e.g. Eton, Winchester, Westminster). When Thomas Ashton was headmaster at Shrewsbury Grammar School in the Elizabethan period there were three masters as well as Ashton working in the school.⁷¹

Curriculum

Generalising about the education pupils received in early modern grammar schools is difficult, as there was no national curriculum. However, in most grammar schools instruction in Latin and grammar lay at the centre of the curriculum, although it was customary for pupils to receive some training in other subjects such as arithmetic as well.⁷² Lily's *Grammar* was the standard general textbook used for the teaching of grammar, but study of classical literature also became a key tool in this instruction, many schools specifying different set texts for each form of a school.⁷³ Such training was essential for those pupils

⁷⁰ J. Basil Oldham, *The History of Shrewsbury School* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952), p. 3.

⁷¹ Often schools laid down rules specifying the skills and qualifications required in school masters as well as pupils (e.g. at Shrewsbury school 'the Headmaster had to be, when appointed "a Master of Arts of two years" standing at least, well able to make a Latin verse, and learned in the Greek tongue'). [Oldham, p. 16, p. 7.]

⁷² Educational writers such as Brinsley (author of *Ludus Literarius* [1612]) advocated continued vernacular studies to maintain students' ability to write and express themselves well in English. [O'Day, p. 61.] Instruction in other ancient languages such as Greek and Hebrew was also occasionally offered in schools in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as well. (Hebrew was taught at Westminster School from 1560 and at Merchant Taylors' from 1561.) [O'Day, p. 68.] A more specific insight into the curriculum of particular schools is occasionally afforded by surviving statutes. Hence, we know that at Sir John Deane's Grammar School in Northwich, Cheshire the boys were to learn 'good literature, both Latin and Greek', and the 'recommended curriculum included the catechism, Henry VIII's accidence and grammar, Erasmus' *Institutum Christianus Hommis*, *Copia*, and *Colloquia*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the works of Terence, Cicero, Horace, Sallust, and Virgil.' [Harris, *Chester*, III, p. 245.]

⁷³ Basic training in reading and writing was usually acquired in petty or ABC schools.

intending to proceed to one of the universities as both Oxford and Cambridge required students to be acquainted with Latin before they entered.

iii- Choir Schools

As indicated above, choir schools were primarily intended for the training of boys for service in churches and cathedrals as choristers and were typically supported by 'monasteries, cathedrals, collegiate churches, and even some parish churches' as a means of ensuring 'a steady supply of choristers'.⁷⁴ Their ecclesiastical affiliations generally located the schools within the precincts of the local church or cathedral for which they were trained.⁷⁵ Sometimes choir schools were established in affiliation with a grammar school.⁷⁶ At Westminster, for example, the grammar school of St Peter's was paralleled by a choir school. The relationships between the two institutions could be close.

Choral companies were usually managed by a Choir Master. He appears to have been responsible for their choral education and their general welfare. When William Hunnis petitioned the Queen for more money as Master of the Chapel Children in 1583 he cited his present impoverishment as a consequence of maintaining the choristers at his own expense:

Maye it please yor honores william Hunnys Mr of the Children of hir hignnes Chappell, moste humble beseecheth to consider of these fewe lynes. ffirst hir Maiestie alloweth for the dyett of xij children of the sayd Chappell daylie vjd a peece by the daye, and xl li by the yeaere for theyre aparrell and all other furniture. [...] it may be obiected that hir Maiestes allowaunce is no whitt less than hir

Use of Lily's textbook was required by statute from 1540. As Watson notes: 'Edward VI's and Queen Elizabeth's Injuncions continued the requirement that none other grammar "shall be taught in any school or other place within the king's realm and dominion".' [Watson, *The Old Grammar Schools*, p. 42.]

⁷⁴ Notably, one of the complaints lodged against the Children of the Chapel Royal (when they were performing plays regularly and commercially) was that their Master appeared to be neglecting their musical training: the original purpose for which they were recruited. [See E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), III (repr. 1951), p. 60.]

⁷⁵ Even when the St Paul's choristers in London began to perform plays commercially the playhouse they appear to have set up for the purpose was within the cathedral walls.

⁷⁶ Choir schools generally appear to have been smaller than grammar schools: for example, in 1574 at St Paul's only nine boys were listed as choristers ('George Bowring, Thomas Morley, Peter Phillipp, Henry Nation, Robert Knight, Thomas Brande, Edward Pattmie (?), Robert Baker, Thomas Johnson'). [Hillebrand, p. 111.] As in the grammar schools, boys were often seven or eight when they entered a choir school, serving as choristers 'until their voices broke, generally at thirteen or fourteen'. [Shapiro, p. 8.] Entry and acceptance as a choir boy appears to have been based upon musical skill rather than money. The recruited boys 'were generally maintained by alms, lodged in the almonry, called *pueri eleemosynariae*, or almonry boys, and supervised by the almoner, who was also frequently the choirmaster'. [Shapiro, p. 1.]

Maiestes ffather of famous memorie therefore allowed: yet considering the pryces of thinges present to the tyme past and what annuities the mr then hadd out of sondrie giftes from the kinge , and dyuers perticuler ffees besydes, for the better mayntenaunce of the sayd children and office: and besides also there hath ben withdrawne from the sayd children synce her Maiestes comming to the Crowne xij d by the daye which was allowed for theyr breakefastes as may apeare by the Treasurer of the chamber his accompt, for the tyme beinge, with other allowaunces incident to the office, which I heere omytt.

The burden heereof hath from tyme to tyme so hindered the Mrs of the children viz mr Bower mr Edwardes, myself and mr ffarant: that notwithstanding some good helps otherwyse some of them dyed in so poore case, and so deeplie indebted that they haue not left scarcelye wherewith to burye them. ⁷⁷

Curriculum

The musical education received by choristers included ‘instruction in polyphonic singing and in playing such instruments as organs, virginalls, viols, cornets, and recorders’. ⁷⁸ This was not the only form of education which choir boys received. In many cases, choir schools also provided for at least some academic training. According to Shapiro the choristers ‘received their secular education from the almoner, from a special chaplain, or at the grammar school of the institution, if it maintained one.’ ⁷⁹

A combination of these practices was adopted for the education of St Paul’s choristers (London), as revealed by the covenant made when Thomas Gyles was elected ‘ Master of the Quiristers’ after Sebastian Westcott’s death in 1582. He agreed that ‘ he should instruct them “in the principles and grounds of Christian Religion, contained in the Little Catechism set out by published authority, and after, when they shall be elder, in the middle Catechism; and in writing and music; and then suffer them to resort to Paul’s school, that they may learn the principles of grammar, and after, as they shall be forwards, learn the said Catechisms in Latin, which they before learned in English, and other good books taught in the said school”’. ⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Cited in Hillebrand, p. 103.

⁷⁸ Shapiro, p.8.

⁷⁹ Shapiro, p.8.

⁸⁰ Cited in Hillebrand, p. 107.

Sometimes more rigorous academic training was reserved for select choristers: in Ely only ‘clever choir boys’ would attend the grammar school. [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Cambridge And The Isle of Ely*, II, ed. by L. F. Salzman (London: Oxford University, 1948), p. 335.]

iv.- School Boy Play Performances

Our knowledge of the specific plays performed by provincial school boys is limited (see appendix iv for a list of provincial schools used as playing venues, 1559-1625). There are almost no references to individual plays and only occasional references to authors.

Fortunately, indirect evidence of the kind cited above can be drawn upon. The initial impetus prompting academic drama to thrive was the Renaissance-inspired interest in exploring the plays of the classics and the pedagogical aim of improving students' fluency in Latin. In keeping with these origins, sixteenth century school statutes and curricula which call for play performances advocate the study and production of classical plays (particularly the comedies of Terence and Plautus).

However, the classical plays performed, particularly from the mid-century onwards, were not exclusively those written by ancient authors. As on the Continent, we find English schoolmasters writing their own Latin dramas or turning to those written by other contemporaries. The plays John Bale records as being performed by Ralph Radcliffe's pupils at Hitchin school in the 1550s were mainly Latin works produced by the headmaster: 'De Patientia Griseldis', 'De Melibaeo Chauceriano', 'De Titi & Gisippi amicitia', 'De Sodomae incendio', 'De Io. Hussi damnatione', 'De Iona deflectione', 'De Lazaro a diuitibus', 'De Judith fortitudini', 'De Iobi afflictionibus', 'De Susannae liberatione'.⁸¹ Bale's list of titles reveals that the schoolboys performed plays of different genre. The implicit variety of Radcliffe's 'classical' plays is even more striking. He borrows from native literature and biblical stories (in particular, the stories of famous biblical heroines), and he writes about a more recent and well-known religious reformer, John Huss (c.1369-1415) in 'De Io. Hussi damnatione'.⁸² Other schoolmasters may have been equally creative when producing neo-classical plays for their pupils.⁸³

⁸¹ Cited in Hillebrand, p. 19.

Some of the plays may have been in English, but Bale records all their titles in Latin.

⁸² The popularity of plays featuring famous heroines parallels fashions amongst schoolboy performers on the Continent and, to a lesser extent, amongst London schoolboy and chorister players. Shapiro provides a possible explanation for this particular dramatic vogue, suggesting that schoolboy actors found 'such roles more congenial than heroic male actors like Oedipus and Hercules'. [Shapiro, p. 155.]

⁸³ Later evidence of one schoolmaster writing neo-classical plays for performance by his pupils is to be found in the Jacobean records of Dorchester (Dorset). Robert Cheek, who became schoolmaster at the Free School in the town in 1595, appears to have written several plays for performance by his students. The prologue of one of these plays survives. It is written in Latin but introduced in English as 'The Prologue to a Presentment of a Playe before Bishopp Thornburie & his Chauncellor, in his Visitacion at Dorchester by ye School Master Sheeke'. The performance appears to have been staged c. 1603-10. [Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 171.] The prologue addresses the 'honoured bishop' and Chancellor and includes a dialogue between the

References to vernacular plays are far fewer in the statutes and records of provincial grammar schools. Plays in English did not possess the same prestige as Latin dramas, English being deemed an inferior tool of expression.⁸⁴ Likewise, while the performance of classical plays was viewed as providing useful training in Latin, promoting fluency in the vernacular was not an objective for most grammar schools, pupils' fluency in English being taken for granted.

Vernacular plays were performed and, in a number of cases, schoolmasters were their authors. Some masters followed the example of continental authors and produced vernacular imitations of classical plays. *Ralph Roister Doister*, written by Nicholas Udall and based on Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus*, is one of the most famous of these imitative works.⁸⁵

A number of schoolmasters' plays were made more widely available through printing and therefore could have been performed in other schools as well. The 1571 quarto edition of *Damon and Pythias* offered Edwardes' play as 'newly imprinted, as the same was showed before the Queen's Majesty, by the Children of her Grace's Chapel, except the prologue that is something altered for the proper use of them hereafter shall have occasion to play it, either in private or open Audience'.⁸⁶ At a later date, William Hawkins' *Apollo Shroving* was published as it was 'acted on *Shroue tuesday* [...] 1626' by his students at 'the Free-Schoole of *Hadleigh* in Suffolke' (*Apollo Shroving*, p. 90). Other playwrights also appear to have written plays in English with schoolboy companies in mind, as their title-pages reveal: for

Prologue and a 'Guest' about the coming play. The prologue emphasises the boys' inexperience and apologises in advance for the shortcomings of their performance (e.g. 'we are small and weak: we will present nothing refined / But if the things we put on for you are pleasing, this nearly nothing (of ours) will have been enough and more.') [Translated in Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 319.] In this respect it is not dissimilar to the prologues which preface some of the plays written by authors such as Lyly for the professional boy companies in London. The prologue also includes a joking allusion to the school's curriculum when the boy performers are described: 'they have taken only the first sip of the elements of grammar and have a nodding acquaintance with the simple letters of Cordier, Aesop, and Terence.' [Translated in Conklin Hays and McGee, Newlyn and Joyce, p. 318.] Mr. Cheek's scholars acted 'two comedies at the sheerehall' for another visiting Bishop in 1623 (Dr. Wright). [Conklin Hays and McGee, Newlyn and Joyce, p. 199.] Cheek may have been the author of these two plays as well. Whether they were in Latin and classical in style is not known, although it is perhaps likely that they were.

⁸⁴ In the early part of the sixteenth century writers often apologised for writing in English, as F. P. Wilson records: 'The writers of late tudor moralities, like the non-dramatic poets who were their contemporaries, apologised for the barbarity of their style and seem to assume that true eloquence is denied to them by the very fact that they are writing in English' (p. 67).

⁸⁵ Probably composed by Udall for performance by his pupils while headmaster at Eton, the play represents an interesting fusion of classical and native forms of writing: 'though abandoning the form of the English interlude in favour of the classical division into Acts' the play 'nevertheless carries over, in new form [...] many traditional English dramatic characteristics, such as the Vice'. [Mottet, p. 64.]

⁸⁶ Shapiro, p. 151.

instance ‘the full title of *Jack Juggler*, as it appeared in printed form, is *A New Enterlude for chyldren to playe named Jacke Jugeler: both wytte, very playsent, and merye*, indicating that it was intended for schoolboys rather than college students’.⁸⁷

Considered collectively, extant texts and provincial archives reveal a consistent taste amongst provincial schools for certain kinds of play: classical and ‘neo-classical’ plays, prodigal-son dramas and moral interludes influenced by the “Christian Terence” tradition all figure prominently in school records.⁸⁸ The popularity of neo-classical plays reflects the academic motivation behind most scholarly play productions, while the interest in morality plays and prodigal sons dramas is in keeping with the didactic agenda of schools who perceived themselves to be offering pupils moral training as well as academic instruction.⁸⁹

‘Romantic comedies’ featuring ‘pathetic heroines’ (such as Susanna or Griselda) also appear to have been popular.⁹⁰ As early as the 1550s Ralph Radcliffe was exercising his boys in plays of this kind. Such plays were fashionable in London amongst the metropolitan schoolboy and chorister troupes as well. By contrast, the provincial taste for “Christian Terence” plays and Prodigal-son dramas does not appear to have been shared by the schools of the capital. Shapiro argues that such plays ‘never gained a foothold in the repertoires of the leading children’s troupes’.⁹¹ In the same way, the dramatic fashions which prevailed in the London schools did not always spread to the provinces. At the turn of the century the commercial London schoolboy players were performing increasingly satirical, topical

⁸⁷ Whitfield White, p. 107.

Similarly, internal references indicate that John Jeffrey’s *The Bugbears* (published c.1564-5) was a children’s play (e.g. in the last chorus ‘the actors refer to themselves as “we boyes”’). [Hillebrand, pp. 284-5.] Shapiro lists a number of other plays from the sixteenth century which appear to have been prepared for unidentified children’s troupes including, *Godly Queen Hester* (c.1525-29), *Thersites* (Udall?- 1537), *Ezechias* (Udall- 1537-56), *Nice Wanton* (1535-53), *Jacob and Esau* (1550-57), *Respublica* (Udall?- 1553), *Tom Tyler and His Wife* (1558-63), *The Disobedient Child* (Ingelond- c. 1558-69), *The Glass of Government* (Gascoigne- 1575). [Shapiro, p. 268.]

⁸⁸ Shapiro argues that plays such as *Jacob and Esau*, *The Nice Wanton* and *The Disobedient Child* were ‘probably performed [...] by pupils of provincial grammar schools rather than by the London schoolboy and chorister troupes who brought plays to court each Christmas’. [Shapiro, p. 15.]

⁸⁹ A number of schools openly stated their intention of offering pupils an education in manners as well as academia (e.g. the school established at Bedford in 1552 was to instruct ‘boys and youths in grammar, literature, and good manners’). [Page, *Bedfordshire*, II, p. 156.]

Prodigal son plays typically moralise upon the dangers of disobedience in children and the evils of ill parenting. Performed for audiences of pupils and parents such plays could serve a dual didactic function. The ‘impulse’ behind the popularisation of prodigal son plays ‘came from the humanists of France, and especially of Germany and the Low Countries who sought to “Christianize” Terence in many neo-Latin plays written for performance by their pupils’. [F. P. Wilson, p. 96.]

⁹⁰ Shapiro, p. 171.

⁹¹ Shapiro, p. 153.

dramas. There is little evidence that provincial schoolboys chose to engage in similarly controversial productions.

Performances

Places of Performance ⁹²

School performances were generally staged in a schoolroom (e.g. the prologue to William Hawkins' *Apollo Shroving* refers to its performance in the schoolroom [line 61]), or in the school hall in larger grammar schools. In the Eton College Account Books for 1566-7, for example, reference is made to the play performed in the hall: 'A barrell of beare spent upon strangers at the playe in the Haul' cost ivs. vjd (see plate 22).⁹³ Occasional references are made to the use of other spaces associated with a school, as when the Westminster boys performed *Miles Gloriosus* in 'Mr Deanes house' in 1564. This 'probably refers to the banqueting hall in the residence of the Dean of Westminster'.⁹⁴ The scholars of the free school of St Bartholomew's, Bristol, who are known to have acted plays in the Elizabethan period, may have performed occasionally in the courtyard of the school.⁹⁵

As indicated above (p. 113), the available spaces could be of varying sizes. In a few cases a space may have been permanently prepared or reserved as a playing place, as appears to have been the case at Hitchin, where Radcliffe converted part of the Carmelite Priory in which he had established the school into a theatre for his pupils. John Bale reported that: '*Potissimum vero theatrum, quod in inferiori aedium parte longe pulcherrimum extruxit.*' As Hillebrand notes, Bale's words 'hardly seem to refer to a temporary stage erected in a chapel or dormitory, as was the custom at Westminster and elsewhere', but rather suggest that Radcliffe 'actually [...] built a theatre'.⁹⁶ In this instance, Radcliffe anticipated the opening of

⁹² Performances by schoolboy and chorister troupes were not confined to schools, as has been indicated. Some troupes were invited to perform at court and, in the provinces, performances by schoolboys are recorded in churches, private houses and town halls. In some cases, provincial schoolboy troupes appear to have toured local towns performing plays on a semi-professional basis. The scholars of Wisbech were rewarded for playing on several occasions in different towns. In 1565, for example, the churchwardens of Leverington made a payment 'to ye skollers of wysbych ye last playe that they where here.' [REED: *Cambridgeshire*, ed. by Anne Brannen, forthcoming.] In the same year the troupe apparently visited Long Sutton, the churchwardens paying 'vjs vjd' to 'the children of wisbich whan they played here'. [Kahrl, p. 73.] However, the majority of pupil productions are likely to have occurred on school property.

⁹³ Motter, p. 264.

⁹⁴ Motter, p. 272.

Shapiro, p. 32.

⁹⁵ Certainly, other entertainments are thought to have been staged in the yard (e.g. the tumbling display by the Queen's players 'at the ffree schole' in 1589-90 is thought to have been staged in the yard). [Pilkinton, REED: *Bristol*, p. 135.]

⁹⁶ Hillebrand, p. 18, p. 20.

The establishment of a permanent playhouses of this kind in London for the Children of the

SOME DIAGRAMS
EXCLUDED ON
INSTRUCTION FROM
THE UNIVERSITY

specially converted indoor playhouses in London for use by the two choral troupes that began to perform professionally in the Elizabethan period (the Children of the Chapel Royal and the Choristers of St Paul's).⁹⁷

Performers

By definition schoolboy productions involved schoolboys as performers.⁹⁸ However, the casts of school plays were not necessarily confined to the pupils. Masters may have occasionally participated in their students' performances. In Edwardes' *Damon and Pythias*,

"Father" Grim the collier [...] boasts, "I will sing in my man's voice/ Chaue troubling bass buss" (ll. 1659-60). He was probably played by an adult actor perhaps by Edwardes himself, who was remembered in Hollyband's *The French Schoolmaster* (1573) not only as "the Master of the Children of the Queen's Chapel", but also a "great player of plays".⁹⁹

On occasion schoolboy troupes may have recruited non-academics for their performances as well: for example, one of the payments recorded in relation to the performance of *Sapientia Solomonis* in 1565-6 by the boys of Westminster school was of 'xiid' 'given to a woman that browght her childe to the stadge and there attended uppon it'. By implication, the child was involved in the play.¹⁰⁰

Organisation of plays

Based upon the evidence of statutes such as that requiring the performance of a Latin play and an English play at Westminster (performed by the grammar and choir school boys, respectively), it is to be assumed that the organisation of performances generally fell to the

Chapel Royal and the Children of Paul's was the first step in the evolution of the indoor theatres, a form of playhouse that was to supersede the open-air amphitheatre in popularity and permanency.

⁹⁷ The Paul's choristers used a playhouse within the grounds of the cathedral and the Children of the Chapel Royal performed in the first Blackfriars theatre, converted into a playhouse from the buttery of the old monastery by their master, Richard Farrant.

⁹⁸ It is not clear whether any distinctions were made with regards to the ages of those selected to perform in large-scale annual productions.

⁹⁹ Shapiro, p. 105.

Hunter has also 'speculated that one or two adult actors appeared in the subplots of Lyly's plays which were performed by the children's troupes in the 1580s and early 1590s, in the role of comic villains or comic butts who are always outwitted by the cleverer, smaller players'. [Shapiro, p. 105.]

¹⁰⁰ Motter, p. 92.

Presumably the child represented the infant brought before Solomon.

masters or ushers of Renaissance schools.¹⁰¹ This assumption finds further confirmation in the payments sometimes made to schoolmasters recompensing them for expenditure upon plays (e.g. in the Eton accounts for 1565-6 a payment is recorded 'to the scholemaster towards his charges about the playe the last Christmas').¹⁰² Further evidence of the central role played by schoolmasters in mounting school dramas is found in those records of plays performed by invitation (e.g. for royal or civic dignitaries). In these cases, a schoolmaster is generally the recipient of any gift made to the schoolboys for their performance.¹⁰³

Performance Times

Performance times are not usually recorded. Plays performed or recited as classroom exercises would have been day-time performances. Public performances might have been presented during the day-time as well, although it may have been more usual to stage public performances in the evening. The prologue to William Hawkins' *Apollo Shroving* includes indirect evidence that it was performed in the evening, the Prologue calling the audience to imagine 'this scene our fourmes, our day this candle light' (*Apollo Shroving*, line 62). The public schoolboy performance alluded to in 'Fancy of Street Cries set to Music by Richard Deering early in the next century' is also an evening performance: 'O yes, al that can sing and say, / Come to the town hall and there shalbe a play, / Made by the schollers of the Free Schoole, / At six a clocke it shall begin'.¹⁰⁴

Financing school plays

Most in-school productions appear to have been funded by the schools themselves. Hence in the Eton College Account Books there are regular records of expenses relating to the mounting of plays, as in 1560-1 when money was allowed 'for ij paire of Hoose & ij Dublette of Rugge for Players in Christmas'.¹⁰⁵ If a public audience was admitted to the production schools may have recouped some of their money by charging the spectators for entry or by making an audience collection. Richard Deering's portrait of a schoolboy performance, cited above, suggests that school companies did charge for entry to some performances, baldly stating that: 'And you bring not your money you come not in'.¹⁰⁶ Radcliffe may have used

¹⁰¹ At Westminster the statutes specified that 'the headmaster should present' the 'Latin play and the usher' the 'English play', as indicated above. [Page, *Buckinghamshire*, II, p. 141.]

¹⁰² Motter, p. 264.

¹⁰³ In Coventry in 1600, for example, 'mr Tovie' was paid 'for his scolers playing A tragidie Acted at maister maiors house', and in 1568-9 at Ludlow 'vjs. viijd.' was given 'in Rewarde to the scollemaster of lemster comynge to thys [s] towne and pleyng with hys scollers before vs and certen of our brethren'. [Ingram, p. 356. Somerset, *REED: Shropshire*, I, p. 83.]

¹⁰⁴ F. P. Wilson, p. 154.

¹⁰⁵ Cited in Motter, p. 264.

¹⁰⁶ Cited in F. P. Wilson, p. 154.

the public play performances of his pupils to raise money for his school at Hitchin in the 1550s, as Whitfield White notes: 'It is possible [...] that the plays were staged not only to improve the student-actors' public speaking and to disseminate Protestant teaching, but perhaps also to raise money for the school in the same way that parish productions helped to finance repairs and new furnishings in churches.'¹⁰⁷

However, as provincial civic and ecclesiastical records reveal, school productions (performed in-house) were sometimes sponsored by local corporations or churches. The schoolmaster might receive a payment for the performance. Whether this was treated as a private reward or a donation to the school is not clear.¹⁰⁸ The expenses involved in producing plays on such occasions might also be subsidized. This was probably the case at Crediton in Devon in 1581-2 when 'xs.' was recorded in the Warden's Corporate Accounts as being 'paid for bearded and other thinges occupied by ye schollers in playeng of theyr Tradege and Commodies in ye Schoule this yere'.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, Mr. Dunne 'scholemaster of the Barthilmews' in Bristol received money from the Mayor and Aldermen 'towards the charges of his playes in the Schole at Christmas next' in 1576-7.¹¹⁰

Pupils did not usually receive any financial reward for performing, although there are exceptions (for example, in 1623-4 the Vicars' Choral Accounts at Exeter record that 'xs.' was given 'vnto some of the secundaris and choristers with other youthes which acted a Commedye in Mr Lawe his hall Treasurer of the Churche but intended for the Colledge hall'.)¹¹¹ Similarly, 'Queen Elizabeth gave fifty marks at Christmas, 1563, to be divided equally between the boys of St Paul's and Westminster Schools for their plays'. The chorister troupes of the Chapel Royal and St Paul's who began performing on a professional basis in the Elizabethan period may have been another exception.¹¹² Members of public audiences

¹⁰⁷ Whitfield White, p. 104.

¹⁰⁸ No doubt some schoolmasters treated such performances as an opportunity to raise money for themselves, while others regarded them as a means of raising funds for their school. The need to raise money to subsidize their schools may have been one of the original reasons prompting the Masters of the London choristers to exhibit their boys in commercial plays. Certainly, Hunnis' petition to the Queen in 1583, pleading for more money for himself and the Children of the Chapel suggests that the company's recent masters had been placed in dire financial straits as a consequence of subsidizing the boys themselves.
[Cited in Hillebrand, p. 103.]

¹⁰⁹ Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 62.

¹¹⁰ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 113.

¹¹¹ In London, it is not clear whether the boys in the commercialized troupes received any financial reward for their performance.
[Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 192.]

¹¹² Motter, p. 277.

In the 1570s the children of the Chapel Royal and St Paul's began performing plays on a regular,

may have occasionally rewarded pupils for skilful performance as well, but payments were not routine. More often, pupils were rewarded with food and drink prior to, or following, their performances. The bills for the plays given by the boys of Westminster before Elizabeth I in 1564 and 1566 included money spent on 'suger candee for the children' and 'buttered beere for ye children being horse'.¹¹³

Audiences

Fellow pupils and staff were probably the only audience for classroom exercises of the sort prescribed by the statutes of Shrewsbury School. Larger-scale productions might be opened to pupils' parents and the wider public. Bale clearly states that the plays at Hitchin were presented before a public audience. In similar fashion, Richard Mulcaster apparently opened the doors to the public when staging performances with his pupils from Merchant Taylors' School in the company's Hall in the 1570s.¹¹⁴ As is well known, the London choristers began

commercial basis in specially adapted playhouses. They were no longer scholarly amateurs. A number of grammar and choral schoolboy troupes were performing plays in London in the Elizabethan period (e.g. Westminster scholars and Westminster choristers, St Paul's choristers, Merchant Taylors' scholars). Many of these performances were given in their schools/ chapels, but occasionally the troupes were invited to perform elsewhere (e.g. at Court). Prior to such performances (and particularly before going to court) the pupils would stage rehearsals attended by select audiences of courtiers and court officials. Attending the rehearsals of companies such as Paul's choristers and the Children of the Chapel Royal became increasingly popular and the monetary gifts spectators had traditionally given effectively became a charge. The Masters of Paul's choristers and the Children of the Chapel Royal decided to exploit the commercial potential of their troupes' performances more fully. They formalized the system of charging entry to plays, arranging plays on a regular basis in specially prepared indoor theatres. However, they continued to argue that such performances were a means of exercising and preparing for Court performances. By 1575 the Paul's choristers were producing plays in a theatre (somewhere within the precincts of the Cathedral), while in 1576 Richard Farrant, Master of the Chapel Royal, had converted part of the Blackfriars monastery into a playhouse in which his troupe could exhibit their plays. Most of the London schoolboy troupes did not follow suit, continuing to perform on an occasional, amateur basis.

¹¹³ Motter, p. 273.

Gloves were sometimes given to the pupils for court performances (e.g. when Richard Mulcaster's pupils from Merchant Taylors' School performed at court in 1573 the Revels Office recorded 'xs' spent on 'ij dozen' gloves 'for Munkesters boys'). [Motter, p. 281.]

¹¹⁴ The Merchant Taylors prohibited performances in the company's hall in 1574 'on the grounds of wounded dignity': 'every lewd persone thinketh himself (for his penny) worthe of the chiefe and most commodious place without respecte of any other either for age or estimation in the comon weale, which bringeth the youthe to such an impudente familiaritie with their betters that often tymes greite contempte of maisters, parents, and magistrate foloweth thereof, as experience of late in this comon hall sufficiently declared'. [Cited in Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1989), p. 129]

Audience figures are unrecorded, but the school halls of institutions such as Winchester and Eton could have accommodated large audiences. Gurr has estimated that an average Elizabethan spectator required 18" x 18" of space. [Cited in Alan B. Somerset, "'How chances it they travel?': Provincial Touring, Playing Places, and the King's Men', *Shakespeare Survey*, 47 (1994), 45-60 (p. 59).] Given the dimensions of the two halls (Eton, 82 ft x 32 ft and Winchester, 63 ft x 30 ft), and allowing a third of the available space for the accommodation of a stage, over 700 people could have been accommodated in the hall at Eton (c. 705 to be precise) and approximately 560

to concentrate on staging public performances before paying audiences thus becoming commercial players.

On other occasions plays were given before more select audiences including prestigious special guests, as in 1564-5 when Queen Elizabeth appears to have attended a performance at Westminster school.¹¹⁵ Similarly, Robert Ashley reported how, as a pupil at 'a public school under Dr Adam Hill' in Salisbury in the late sixteenth century, he and the other boys 'recited comedies and put on other solemn shows before the most illustrious Henry Earl of Pembroke - who was then living in the area'.¹¹⁶

How spectators were accommodated during school performances is largely undocumented. At performances staged in smaller schoolrooms it may have been usual to have a standing audience, as more spectators could be accommodated in that way. For those productions mounted in school halls it was probably more usual for at least part of the audience to be seated on benches (these could be arranged in rows as was apparently the practice at the indoor playhouses). Finer provision may have been made for special or privileged guests in the audience. More permanent seating was probably provided in any fixed playing places (e.g. at Hitchin, Radcliffe may have erected a scaffold of seating around the stage as was sometimes done for university performances).

Staging

While we do not have many contemporary descriptions of provincial schoolboy performances we can reconstruct some aspects of their staging by drawing upon the indirect evidence of school records and surviving play texts performed by boy companies. As this section is exploring staging practices the focus is upon the techniques and preparations made for public or larger-scale productions (e.g. the kind that might be presented before parents or school guests).

Stages

Whether stages were used for performances given in smaller schoolrooms is not certain. In particularly small rooms a stage might have been impractical and unnecessary. However, it would be wrong to rule out staged productions in such spaces. As Chapter 2 demonstrated,

people might have been accommodated in Winchester's hall.

¹¹⁵ Motter, p. 278.

¹¹⁶ Translated from Latin in Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 317.

plays were mounted on stages in rooms as small as that afforded by Cambridge's Guild hall (22 feet x 17.6 feet).¹¹⁷

The accounts of larger grammar schools (such as Eton, Winchester and Westminster) confirm that plays were performed on stages in at least some Elizabethan and Jacobean schools.¹¹⁸

The records of each school contain payments for the erection and dismantling of stages for plays. At Winchester in 1573, payments were made 'for putting up and taking down a scaffold' and for the transportation of 'ly ioystes and of other things borrowed for the same scaffold', and 'ij carpenters' were paid for 'ij Daies woorke about the stage'.¹¹⁹ Similarly, at Eton in 1566-7 'five men worked nearly a week putting up the stage in the Hall,' including 'Iohn Hawthorn carpenter & his man' who were paid ten shillings and ten pence 'for makying tressles & scaffold[es] for the stage & taking it downe'.¹²⁰ The amount of material and time involved in constructing the latter indicates that school stages could be large, substantial structures. Stages appear to have been erected for public performances in smaller, less wealthy schools as well. *Apollo Shroving*, staged at Hadleigh Grammar School in 1626, is known to have been performed upon a stage, the speaker of the prologue referring to 'this stage' (*Apollo Shroving*, line 108).¹²¹

Lighting

School records detailing expenses on plays regularly include payments for candles or torches, suggesting that artificial lighting was customary for many school productions (e.g. at Winchester in 1573 'vij ly linck[es] et ja duoden[a] ca[n]delaru[m]' were bought for the

¹¹⁷ A record found in Liverpool's annual audit of 1572-3 may conceal a reference to simple stage materials: 'Iohn Rile also beyng schole mayster in this Towne acknowledgyth hym to haue in his custodie one Cheste and fourtyne small bordes mor twoe coops the wheche he made in apparell for mayster maiors sonne William Crosse, and Thomas Burscough with others to playe theyr paiaunces in' (own emphasis). [REED: *Lancashire*, ed. by David George (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1991), p. 40.]

¹¹⁸ Westminster School is discussed in this section, for at this date it was a distinct community, although upon the fringes of London. John Stow, for example, wrote separately of the 'City of Westminster' at the end of his *Survey of London* in 1598. [John Stow, *A Survey of London*, 2nd edn (1603), ed. by Henry Morley (London: Routledge 1902), p. 404.]

¹¹⁹ Motter, p. 34 and p. 264.

Cowling transcribes the Latin records relating to expenses upon the stage: 'p[ro] div[er]sis expe[n]s[is] circa scaffold[am] erige[n]d[am] et depond[am] et p[ro] domu[n]culis - de novo co[m]posit[is] cu[m] cariag[i]o et recariag[i]o ly ioyst[es] et alior[um] mutuat[orum] ad eande[m] scaffold[am]'. [Cowling, p. 63.]

¹²⁰ Motter, p. 51.

Johnston, REED: *Buckinghamshire*, forthcoming.

¹²¹ The location of school stages is generally unrecorded. The parallel evidence of performances staged in the college halls of Oxford and Cambridge, the Inns of Court and the banqueting halls of private houses, suggests that performances in school halls would have been given at the upper end of the room, probably between the dais and the fire-place (where present) or upon the dais itself.

‘three nights of comedies and tragedies’, and in 1565-6 at Eton fifteen pence was ‘spent at the playe in Candels’).¹²² Sometimes the evidence suggests that the schoolmen took additional care to illuminate the playing area, using lanterns as well. At Eton, for instance, in 1560-1 ‘ijd’ was spent upon ‘A Pully in the Gallerie for the Lanterne.’¹²³

Costumes

Evidence from smaller grammar schools is sparse. However, where there are records of performance reference is sometimes made to the provision of costumes. At Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1600, for instance, ‘vj s. j d.’ was ‘paide for Clothe to be clothes to the boyes who plaide the Commodie’, the boys probably being the ‘schollers’ mentioned as performing at the Merchant Court elsewhere in the same year’s records. Similarly, the payment by Crediton’s corporation for ‘beardes and other thinges occupied by ye schollers’ in 1581-2 is likely to represent a payment for costumes and props.¹²⁴

More detailed evidence for the use of costumes in amateur school-boy productions is to be found in the accounts of the larger grammar schools. That performances at Eton were usually costumed is evident from the school’s possession of a sizable costume wardrobe as early as 1571-2, when its contents were inventoried. Their stock included a variety of colourful items, many made from expensive materials: for example, ‘iij cassock[es] of redde silke gardid with blewe’, ‘j cassocke of blacke velvet gardid with redde silke’, ‘j cassocke of whyte silke gardid with blacke’.¹²⁵ Their wardrobe also provided clothing for characters of different social status and sex (e.g. ‘ij servant[es] cottes for children [wh]ich hathe one quart[er] of redd silke & an other of blew silke’; ‘j womens cassocke of blewe silke gardid w[i]th redd bra[n]ched flowers’; ‘ij womens cassock[es] of whyte silke [...] thone ope[n] before thother close’).¹²⁶

Other school troupes borrowed or hired costumes for special performances. One of the expenses recorded when the Westminster scholars staged a play in 1565-6 was for the ‘hyer of crownes, hayres and beardes’. Meanwhile, six shillings and eight pence had to be spent

¹²² Cowling, p. 63.

Motter, p. 34.

Johnston, *REED: Buckinghamshire*, forthcoming.

¹²³ Johnston, *REED: Buckinghamshire*, forthcoming.

¹²⁴ J. J. Anderson, ed., *REED: Newcastle-upon-Tyne* (London: Manchester University; Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1982), p. 133.

Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 62.

¹²⁵ Johnston, *REED: Buckinghamshire*, forthcoming.

¹²⁶ Johnston, *REED: Buckinghamshire*, forthcoming.

replacing the 'arle of rutland's ...raper and scabberd of veluett which...was by evil happ broken in the plaie.' Presumably, the Earl had lent the boys his rapier and scabbard for the performance.¹²⁷

The Revels Office was another possible source of costumes for those school companies in the vicinity of London. They regularly hired out playing-clothes to a variety of acting companies, including the London-based school troupes (e.g. the bill of expenses for the two plays performed by Westminster's scholars before the Queen in 1566 includes 'iiii d.' paid 'for bote hyre to bring apparell from the reuells' and 'x s.' 'geuen to Mr Holte yeoman of the reuells').¹²⁸ In those schools specialising in larger-scale dramatic productions it may have been conventional to provide servants to assist the pupils in their costuming as well. Certainly, in 1566 'three gentlewomen' were paid by Westminster School as those 'that did attyre the childrene' before their performance.¹²⁹

Sets and Props

Extant records indicate that it was usual to use some stage furniture, as well as costumes, for large school productions. Often the props recorded are few and simple. More ambiguous are a number of references which suggest that boy companies sometimes used title boards, a technique modelled on what was perceived to be classical practice, and depicted in the illustration accompanying the 1493 edition of Terence.¹³⁰ A payment was recorded in the Westminster accounts relating to the performance of *Sapientia Solomonis* 'for drawing the tytyle of the comedie'. A payment made in 1564-5 to 'Wm Smythe for ayall paper inke and colores for the wryting of greate letters' may have been for similar work.¹³¹ Similarly, in *Apollo Shroving* the action of the prologue includes the speaker displaying a 'Banner wherin is the name of *Eunuchus*' (the title of a Terence comedy previously performed at the school), and a 'Rowle' carrying the title *Apollo Shroving* (*Apollo Shroving*, line 30, line 79).

¹²⁷ Cited in Motter, pp. 92-3.

¹²⁸ Motter, p. 273.

Thomas Gyles, the Master of the Revels, records this fact and the consequent damage caused the costumes by their regular use in a complaint of 1572. He described how the Yeoman of the Revels hired out costumes 'to all sort of parsons that wyll hyer the same by reson of wyche comen vsag the glosse & bewtye of the same garmentes ys lost & canott sowel serve to [...] be often allterryde & to be shewyde before hyr hyghnes as otherwyes yt myght'. [Motter, p. 23.]

¹²⁹ Motter, p. 272.

¹³⁰ Richard Hosley, 'The Formal Influence of Plautus and Terence', in *The Elizabethan Theatre*, 9, ed. by John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris (London: Edward Arnold, 1966), 131-145 (p. 130).

¹³¹ Motter, p. 92 and p. 273.

Even more intriguing are a number of payments made for the preparation of 'houses'. The 'divers expenses' relating to the plays performed at Winchester in 1573 include money for 'little houses newly built'.¹³² Likewise, in the records of Westminster School reference is made 'from 1580 "for making of the houses for the first plaie in the haul" and "ii houses for the second playe in the haul"' (see plate 23).¹³³ Some insight into the nature and role of such 'houses' is provided by a reference in the Revels Accounts of 1567-8 which details the preparations made for the court performance of 'Orestes and a Tragedie of the kinge of Scottes, to ye which belonged divers howses for the settinge forthe of the same as Stratoes howse, Gobbyns howse, Orestioes house Rome, the Pallace of Prosperitie, Scotland and a great Castell one thothere side'. As this list indicates the 'houses' were used to designate different locations. Other evidence reveals them to have been typically constructed from lathe and canvas.¹³⁴

The popularity of this staging device amongst at least some of the dramatically active schools probably stems from the prevailing fashion for performing classical or neo-classical plays in the academic world, the 'conventional classical stage-setting' being 'a street scene consisting of an open space backed by one or more "citizens" houses'.¹³⁵ Schoolboy companies performing in halls with screens could have performed their classical and neo-classical plays at the lower end of the hall, the 'houses' being 'suggested by the openings in the hall-screen'. However, as indicated above, performances are more likely to have been given at the upper end of halls and the references from Winchester and Westminster suggest that they preferred to 'build actual settings'.¹³⁶

Special Effects

Few of the plays associated with provincial schoolboys require sophisticated special effects (those performed by the commercialised boy companies of London are far more ambitious in

¹³² Motter, p. 34.

Motter notes that the allusion to the 'pro domunculis' could be a reference 'to dressing rooms on the stage floor, and not scenery at all', but it is more plausibly a reference to stage houses of the kind used in many academic and court performances (p. 34).

¹³³ Richard Southern, 'The "Houses" of the Westminster play', *Theatre Notebook*, 3 (1949), 46-52 (p. 48).

¹³⁴ Southern records how Mr. Tanner, keeper of the Muniments at Westminster Abbey, records a payment in 1569 for ' "so much canvesse as covered an house"'. [Southern, p. 48.]

¹³⁵ Tydeman, p. 34.

¹³⁶ This may have been equally true of neo-classical performances staged in other smaller provincial grammar schools such as Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

[Tydeman, p. 34.]

Southern drew much this conclusion in his article on 'The "Houses" of the Westminster play': 'it is to be stated that the custom of setting with houses arose normally, and indeed inevitably, with the development of the presentation of classical type plays' (p. 5).

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this respect). However, the companies do appear to have been interested in producing some stage illusions. When the scholars of Westminster performed *Sapientia Solomonis* they paid two shillings 'for the loan of a thondre barrell' and for the services of 'twoo men wch browght the same and thondered'.¹³⁷ Similarly, the payment for 'gunpowlder' in the Eton accounts for 1560-1 suggests that the boys may have included pyrotechnic effects in the plays they performed 'in Christemas' that year.¹³⁸

Music

Music plays an important part in many of the extant plays thought to have been first performed by, or written for, schoolboys. Shapiro offers an illuminating statistical account of this importance:

of the thirty-two extant children's plays acted before 1591, 29 (91%) have a total of one hundred and twenty-eight songs, or an average of 4.1 each. After the late 1590s, 16 of the 21 plays (76%) acted by the Children of Paul's contain a total of 80 songs, or an average of five each, while 72% of the plays acted by Shakespeare's troupe during a corresponding period contain songs; the average of 1.4 songs per play is considerably lower.¹³⁹

Bearing in mind the musical training of the chorister troupes, the statistics relating to the Children of St Paul's are, perhaps, unsurprising. The playwrights composing plays for them were presumably catering for the talents of the boys. The similar prevalence of music in the plays acted by boy companies generally is, however, worth remarking upon. Many of these plays were performed by grammar school troupes and musical training was not a standard part of their curriculum, as Watson notes:

After the Song Schools were dissolved, along with the Chantry Schools, the school-teaching of music declined, except in the Cathedral Choristers' School and a few other schools [...] The interest in the Grammar School became concentrated on Renaissance classical studies. [...] Music was crowded out of the Grammar School subjects.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Motter, p. 92.

¹³⁸ Johnston, *REED: Buckinghamshire*, forthcoming.

¹³⁹ Shapiro, p. 235.

¹⁴⁰ Watson, *The English Grammar Schools*, p. 205 and p. 212.

Notably, the few exceptions Watson notes included schools such as Merchant Taylors' School in London and Westminster, famous for their dramatic activity (e.g. at Westminster School 'c.1560 onwards, twice a week an hour was given to music with the choirmaster').¹⁴¹ The example of Westminster may provide a clue to the way in which some grammar school boys acquired musical skills. In those towns possessing a Choir School and a Grammar School, the scholars might receive training in singing and music from the choirmaster, just as choristers sometimes received academic instruction at the hands of grammar school masters.

At the same time, it is possible that choristers were recruited to provide the singing and music included in plays performed by their grammar school peers. In York, the Midsummer play organised in 1585 by Mr. Grafton the local schoolmaster and probably involving his pupils as performers, drew upon the musical talents of local choristers. Grafton's Bill of Expenses includes the following reference: 'I am to please Mr. Wormall for the lending of the Queristers and prickinge of the songes; but wat I cannot set downe, for he will not name ought, but stand to courtesy'. Likewise, it is thought that the 'Westminster choirboys may have acted in conjunction with the pupils of the Westminster Grammar School providing the musical part of the entertainments'.¹⁴²

In other cases, provincial schools may have hired local 'professional musicians, or waits, for their plays, as was apparently done for college plays at Cambridge and for plays the King's Men produced at Blackfriars after 1609.'¹⁴³ According to the Congleton town accounts (as preserved in an antiquarian transcription) twenty shillings was 'Geaven to Calis the musitian' in 1620-1 'for his paynes in comminge from Chester & playinge for the Schollers in their play on Shrouetuesday'.¹⁴⁴ Although the location of the performance is not recorded and may not have been the school, this example demonstrates that schoolboy players sometimes collaborated with professional musicians when performing publicly.

¹⁴¹ Watson, *The English Grammar Schools*, p. 215.

In London, Richard Mulcaster, the headmaster of Merchant Taylors' school in the 1570s (and responsible for introducing dramatic performances at the school) was a musician and offered his pupils musical training. One of his ex-pupils, Judge Whitlocke, recorded how: 'His care was my skill in musique in which I was brought up by daily exercise in it, as in singing and playing upon instruments'. [Watson, *The English Grammar Schools*, p. 212.]

¹⁴² Johnston and Rogerson, I, p. 423.

Shapiro, p. 306.

¹⁴³ Shapiro, p. 254.

¹⁴⁴ Alan C. Coman, 'The Congleton Accounts: Further Evidence of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama in Cheshire', *REED: Newsletter*, 14:1 (1989), 3-18 (p. 8).

Rehearsals

If Charles Hoole's prescriptions on the teaching of Terence were followed, students rehearsed even for plays performed as academic exercises before fellow pupils.¹⁴⁵ What evidence there is indicates that it was usual to rehearse for performances before a larger, partly non-academic audience.¹⁴⁶ Certainly, those schoolboy companies invited to perform at Court staged rehearsals, as it was customary for the Master of Revels or other court officials to view performances before they were presented before royalty. Such a performance is recorded indirectly in the Westminster School archives of 1564: 'vi d.' was spent 'at ye rehersing before Sir Thomas Benger for pinnes and sugar candee' (Sir Thomas Benger was the current Master of the Revels).¹⁴⁷

Whether pupils learnt their parts by heart is another irresolvable question. However, it is likely to have been the case, there being no mention of pupils using texts in extant school records. Again, indirect evidence tends to confirm this hypothesis. In 1573-4, when Elizabeth was entertained with various diversions at Hampton Court (including a play and two masks), one of the expenses recorded in the Revels documents was 'for the diettes & Lodging of dyvers children at Saint Iohnes whiles they learned their partes & Iestures meete for the Mask'.¹⁴⁸ Not only does this reference suggest that the boys memorised their parts for dramatic entertainments, but that they practiced performing in a particular style.

v- The Case Study

In the following section I want to look at one recorded schoolboy play performance in more detail, to offer a specific illustration of schoolboy staging practices in the period. The case study focuses upon the production of *Apollo Shroving* at Hadleigh Grammar school in 1626. Although the performance occurs shortly after the end of the Jacobean period, the survival of the play text and other evidence relating to its production (e.g. a cast list) make the performance unusually well-documented and therefore particularly suited to a reconstructive case-study.

¹⁴⁵ See p. 99 above.

¹⁴⁶ There are few references to the preparations prior to those performances which are recorded. Once more, the most detailed information relates to larger, southern grammar schools such as Eton, Westminster and Winchester.

¹⁴⁷ Motter, p. 272.

¹⁴⁸ Motter, p. 25.

The Performance of *Apollo Shroving* at Hadleigh Grammar School, 1626

Record of the performance of *Apollo Shroving* at Hadleigh is preserved in the printed edition of the play published in 1627. The title-page reads: Apollo Shro= / ving / COMPOSED / for the Schollars of the Free-Schoole of *Hadleigh / in Suffolke.* / And acted by them on *Shroue / tuesday*, being the sixt of *Febru-/ ary*, 1626' (*Apollo Shroving*, p. 95). The play was 'entered in the Stationers' Register on 8 April, 1627, and was published, if not on 25 April, certainly shortly after that date as a small octavo' (*Apollo Shroving*, p. 1).

As is apparent from this title-page, the play was published anonymously. Further information about the play's composition and author is afforded in the correspondence between 'E. W.' and the bookseller which prefaces the printed play. In a letter to 'my singular honest stationer, Mr. Robert Mylbourne' E. W. writes:

As you are a true Booke-seller, you must approue your selfe a true Booke-restorer: and therefore by hooke or by crooke, see that you send backe my Booke. And yet not my Booke. For it was but a borrowed Booke, for which my promise and credit lye in mortgage to the Author, the Schoolemaster of *Hadley*, who with some difficulty lent it me, haueing no other coppy of this English *Lesson* which he prepared for a By-exercise for his schollars at the last *Carneval*. He told me that hee huddled it vp in hast, and that it being onely an essay of his owne faculty, and of the actiuity of his tenderlings, he was loath it should come vnder any other eye, then of those Parents and domestique friends who fauorably beheld it, when it was represented by the children. (*Apollo Shroving*, p. 95.)

According to the unidentified E. W. the play was written by the schoolmaster of Hadleigh.¹⁴⁹ As Rhoads records, no more specific identification of the play's author was offered until the eighteenth century when 'Isaac Reed finally identified the author as William Hawkins' (*Apollo Shroving*, p. 3). Further research has confirmed that Hawkins was the schoolmaster at Hadleigh in 1626 and therefore the probable author of the play.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Rhoads suggests that E. W. might be the Edward Webster 'who, on 9 November, 1636, witnessed with Hawkins the will of the Rector of Hadleigh, Dr. Thomas Goad.' [*Apollo Shroving*, p. 4.]

¹⁵⁰ 'In his Latin verse narrative *Nisus Verberans et Vapulans* he [Hawkins] reproduces, partly in the text and partly in a series of marginal notes, a part of the declaration of the plaintiff in the case of Coleman vs. Hawkins. From this we learn that he was accused of having assaulted, on 2 August, 1629, a pupil whom in the text he calls Carbunculus but whose family name of Coleman is given in a side note. The author tells us elsewhere in the same poem [...] that at the time of the alleged assault young Colman had been enrolled in his school for two years and some months. Since we are likewise told that the boy had been first brought to him at some time after his assumption of the schoolmastership, it is a plausible inference that this earlier event had not taken place later

Auspices for the play

The play was performed on Shrove Tuesday 1626 (*Apollo Shroving*, p. 95). The play includes explicit references to the Shrove holiday and the play's Shrovetide performance. Lauriger's song in Act I, scene 5 alludes to it being 'our shrouing day', for example (*Apollo Shroving*, 1. 321). Shrove Tuesday, also known as 'Fat Tuesday' and 'Mardi-gras' was a holiday traditionally associated with carnival and temporary misrule: 'Poised between Christmas feasting and Lenten fasting' Shrovetide was 'a unique and dramatic moment in the church year', partaking of 'Christmastide merriment' and the 'penitential spirit' of Lent.¹⁵¹ In some noble houses it was customary to elect a Lord of Misrule on this date. It was also a day traditionally associated with entertainments (including play performances): 'At Court the day seems invariably to have been celebrated by mummings and disguisings and plays and often likewise at the households of the great nobles' (*Apollo Shroving*, p. 33). There is evidence of plays being performed at the early modern universities at Shrovetide as well. In 1604-5, for example, a tragedy of 'Lucretia' was acted at St John's College, Oxford on 'Shroue Munday'.¹⁵² There is evidence of other schoolboys performing at Shrovetide in the period, too. The scholars of Congleton performed 'on Shrouetuesday' in 1620-1, as noted above (p. 132).¹⁵³

In keeping with the day's associations with both 'play' and impending penitence, the play makes 'playing' and shroving part of its metier (e.g. the character of Ludio embodies the

than the year 1626', and that Hawkins was at the school by 1626. [*Apollo Shroving*, pp. 3-4.]

Hawkins date and place of birth are not known but he matriculated at Christ's College, Cambridge in 1619 and therefore was probably born between 1600-1605. [*Apollo Shroving*, p. 10.] He graduated as a Bachelor of Arts in 1622-3 and as a Master of Arts in 1626. 'Between the two graduations he had been received into holy orders, having been ordained deacon and priest at Peterborough in September, 1625.' [*Apollo Shroving*, p. 10.] He was schoolmaster at Hadleigh by 1616 and was later to become curate to Dr. Thomas Goad. He died in 1637. [*Apollo Shroving*, p. 16.]

Apollo Shroving was not his only literary work or publication. Hawkins was also the author of several Latin works (including eclogues and a verse narrative): *Eclogia cvi nomen pestifugivm* (1630), *Eclogae Tres Virgilianae* (1631), *Nisus Verberans et Vapvlans* (1632) and *Corolla Varia* (1634) [*Apollo Shroving*, p. 88]. He contributed to verse collections as well (including Alexander Gill's *IIAPEPTA* [1632]). [*Apollo Shroving*, p. 89.] According to Rhoads, some of his Latin verses were performed by Hadleigh scholars: 'On 14 September, 1630, his eclogue called 'Pestifugium' was recited by two of the schoolboys in the presence of some members of the University of Cambridge who had fled to Hadleigh to escape the plague [...]. On 9 April, 1632, two Hadleigh scholars recited another of the author's eclogues, 'Corydon Aufuga', before the visiting Bishop of Rochester.' [*Apollo Shroving*, pp. 13-4.]

¹⁵¹ R. Chris Hassel Jr, *Renaissance Drama and the English Church Year* (London: University of Nebraska, 1979), p. 112.

¹⁵² Elliott, *REED: Oxford University*, forthcoming.

¹⁵³ Coman, p. 8.

spirit of perpetual and unregulated ‘play’, while Apollo’s court represents a forum for punishing ill-behaviour and enforcing penitence). At the same time, Hawkins uses a debate between Lauriger and Ludio to reveal that the play as a whole combines playful and serious aims:

Lau. Belike you thinke play to be Apollos Shrouetide.

Lud. I that I doe: else why play wee now in honour of Apollo.

Lau. I tell thee, this our play if it bee weighed right, is three

ounces study, and but one ounce play. This flash of recreation is
not kindled without a sparke of diligence. Our playing
now is a kind of study.

(*Apollo Shroving*, III. 4. 1388.)

Notably, Hawkins’ greater emphasis is upon the drama’s educational function, in keeping with traditional justifications for the inclusion of dramatic exercise in school curricula. E. W.’s description of the play as an ‘English *Lesson* [...] prepared for a By-Exercise,’ likewise, highlights the didactic motive for the play’s composition and performance at the school (*Apollo Shroving*, p. 95).

The Play

The play’s moralistic and didactic agenda, and its classical structure and frame of reference, are typical of many neo-classical plays written for performance in schools in the early modern period.¹⁵⁴ In its incorporation of academic jokes and allusions, its celebration of education and its thematic focus upon schools and scholars, the play also resembles a number of other school plays.¹⁵⁵ In this respect, it has much in common with late sixteenth and early seventeenth century university dramas such as *The Pilgrimage to Parnassus* trilogy and *Club Law* as well.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ The play conforms to a classical five-act structure, includes numerous allusions to classical authors (e.g. Terence), and features characters drawn from classical sources, such as Apollo and the Muses, Clio and Euterpe.

¹⁵⁵ Among the most intriguing of the academic allusions included in the play is Philoponus’s discussion of the instruction implicitly offered by the plays of Terence: ‘*Siren* from *Terence* pleads, that in yong men / Deepe quaffing, raring, whooring, is no fault. / Doth not that Poet represent the parts, / The passions, and seuerall enormities / Of cockering doting fathers, of lewd sonnes, / Of cheating slaues, and cogging parasites, / Thus he describes the vices of those times, / That readers might hate, not imitate’ (*Apollo Shroving*, V. 1. 2115).

¹⁵⁶ Rhoads discusses these parallels arguing that what the university plays ‘do for the university, *Apollo Shroving* in a more humble way does for the grammar school. [...] It represents the English School play in the strictest sense, the play written by a schoolmaster about schoolboys for schoolboys to perform as a “By-exercise”’ (*Apollo Shroving*, p. 79).

Parallels can also be drawn between Hawkins' play and some of the plays written for the professional stage in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period. In its incorporation of metatheatre, the play has something in common with many Renaissance playhouse dramas. The play's inclusion of an on-stage spectator even finds specific parallels in dramas such as the adapted text of Marston's *The Malcontent* (1604) and Fletcher's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607). Likewise, in its parody of popular distaste for classical literature and Latin works, personified in the comic figure of Lala who refuses to listen to the play if it is to be in Latin, *Apollo Shroving* is similar to plays such as Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, in which the character of Littlewit ridiculously anglicises and simplifies the classical tales of Hero and Leander and Damon and Pythias to make them more accessible to the Fair audience. Even closer parallels have been identified between *Apollo Shroving* and another playhouse drama, Ben Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels*.¹⁵⁷

The School

The earliest reference to a grammar school in Hadleigh 'shows that it was in existence on 7 May, 1382, six months before the foundation of Winchester College.'¹⁵⁸ In the late sixteenth century the school (or 'Free-Schoole') occupied part of the Guildhall complex. In the late fifteenth century (c. 1460-1470) the two storey Market House (which forms the central part of the Guildhall facing the churchyard) was 'enlarged by the addition of the two wings to the east and west facing the churchyard together. [...] The west wing, between the Guildhall and the deanery garden, was occupied by the old Hadleigh Grammar School'.¹⁵⁹

When Hawkins came to the school it may have been newly renovated, as Rhoads reports: [In *Nisus Verberans*] 'Hawkins tells us that when he came to Hadleigh as successor to "Bathypogon" it was to a school "migrans de sedibus imis et renovata"' (*Apollo Shroving*,

¹⁵⁷ Rhoads, *Apollo Shroving*, p. 84.

¹⁵⁸ *Apollo Shroving*, p. 11.

A school may have existed even earlier 'since Hadleigh men had taken degrees at Cambridge before 1370'. ['The Guildhall Hadleigh, Suffolk', pamphlet provided by Sue Andrews, Joint Archivist at the Hadleigh Archive (Hadleigh: Hadleigh Market Feoffment Charity, 1981), p. 1.] Whether or not the fourteenth century school remained continuously open until the late sixteenth century, it was evidently active in the Elizabethan period as two students from the school went on to university. John Boise (1561-1644) and John Overall (1560-1619) both went to St John's College, Cambridge in 1575 and were therefore in Hadleigh from c. 1570 (*Apollo Shroving*, p. 12).

¹⁵⁹ Although the school is described as the 'Free-Schoole' on the play's title-page, attendance at the school was not necessarily free: 'Hawkins' statement in *Nisus Verberans et Vapulans* that he was to be paid 20s. a year for the instruction of Carbunculus' indicates that fees were charged (*Apollo Shroving*, p. 12.) The location of the early school is unknown. ['The Guildhall Hadleigh,' p.1.]

p. 13). This could mean ‘that the school had been newly moved from another building’, but as there is no evidence of the school occupying a separate location in the seventeenth century ‘a more probable meaning is that a new schoolroom had been prepared on an upper floor’ (*Apollo Shroving*, p. 13). At a much later date the west wing was ‘used as almshouses until it was so badly damaged by a storm in 1884 that it had to be demolished’.¹⁶⁰

The performance of *Apollo Shroving* at the school was not the first play production by the schoolboys, as is revealed in the text of the play. The Prologue begins the play by reading an extract from Terence’s *Eunuchus* and later alludes to the fact that, ‘Wee acted *Comicke Terence his Eunuchus*’ (*Apollo Shroving*, Prologue. 29). If there were other performances at the school in the early seventeenth century they are not recorded.

However, at least one of the boys who performed in Hawkins’ play was to utilise his acting skills at university as well. John Kidby, who played the parts of Captain Complement and Slim Slug, matriculated at Queen’s College, Cambridge in 1629 and appears to have performed ‘in at least one Cambridge play’: ‘In the cast in the British Museum copy of Peter Hausted’s anti-Puritan comedy, *The Rivall Friends*, acted by Queen’s Men, 19 March, 1631-2, before the king and queen, the name “Kidbye” stands beside the character “Z. Knowlitt”’ (*Apollo Shroving*, p. 38).

The Performance

The Time and Place

The title-page records that the play was written for, and acted by, the scholars of Hadleigh school, but the fact that the performance was given in the school is recorded in the text of the prologue: ‘But in a more nearer circle now we walke, / Where with our selves, and of our selves we talke. / Our Schoole imagine here new built and dight, / This Scene our formes, our day this candle light’ (own emphasis) (*Apollo Shroving*, Prologue. 59). This speech suggests that the play was performed in the school, by candlelight (and, therefore probably in the evening). As the school appears to have consisted of one large schoolroom in the west wing of the Guildhall, this was presumably the venue for the performance. The space is likely to have been largely uncluttered, as desks were not common in Elizabethan and Jacobean schoolrooms.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ ‘The Guildhall Hadleigh,’ p. 1.

¹⁶¹ O’Day, p. 60.

The Performers

The title-page introduces the play as a work acted by 'the Schollars of the Free-Schoole'; and in his prefatory letter E. W. talks of the play being 'represented by the children' (*Apollo Shroving*, p. 95). More detailed information about the schoolboy performers and the play's casting is provided in the list of *dramatis personae* prefacing the printed play. This list records the names of all the actors and the parts which they played (see note for the cast list).¹⁶² The play was performed entirely by boys (twenty in total) and involved doubling (e.g. John Kidby played 'Captain Complement' and 'Slim Slugge', Joseph Beaumont read the prologue and epilogue and played the part of 'Jack Implement', and Nicholas Coleman played 'Lala' and 'Musaeus') (*Apollo Shroving*, pp. 97-8). The cast also apparently included several siblings (e.g. Joseph and Philip Beaumont, John and Nicholas Coleman, William and George Richardson).

As noted above (p. 138), at least one of the players, John Kidby, went on to act at Cambridge University. He was not, however, the only Hadleigh scholar to go to university. At least four, and possibly five, of the other performers in *Apollo Shroving* also 'soon entered Cambridge' (*Apollo Shroving*, p. 37). In 1631-2 Joseph Beaumont matriculated at Peterhouse and Nicholas Coleman at Queen's; in 1633 William Cardinall 'was admitted as a fellow-commoner at Christ's'; and in 1638 'Denner Strutt, the Clio of the play [...] passed from Cambridge to Gray's inn' (*Apollo Shroving*, p. 39). Information about the other fifteen boys involved in the performance is more limited.¹⁶³

¹⁶² The cast list was as follows: 'Prologus a yong Schollar' (Joseph Beaumont), 'Lala a woman spectator' (Nicholas Coleman), 'Musaeus, Apollos Priest & Iudge' (Nicholas Coleman), 'Clio a Muse, his assistant' (Denner Strutt), 'Euterpe a Muse, another assistant' (William Richardson), 'Lauriger his verger' (Samuel Cricke), 'Drudo his Booke bearer' (George Richardson) 'Preco the Cryer' (Philip Beaumont), 'Thuriger the Sexton of Apollos Temple' (William Cardinall), 'Scopas the Sextons boy' (James Stutfield), 'Philoponus a diligent student' (John Bower), 'Amphibius a perplexed schollar' (George Liuin), 'Novice a young fresh schollar' (Henry Whiting), 'Rowland Retro an hasty non-proficient' (Henry Cocke), 'Geron an old man, his mournfull father' (John Coleman), 'Ludio a truant schooleboy' (Henry Meriton), 'Siren a sea nimph, messenger for Queene Hedone' (Wentworth Randall), 'Captaine Complement a teacher of gestures and fashions' (John Kidby), 'Jacke Implement his Page' (Joseph Beaumont), 'Mistresse Indulgence Gingle, a cockering mother' (George Meriton), 'Iohn Gingle her sonne a disciple of Captaine Complemente' (John Gale), 'Iugge Rubbish maid-servant to Mistresse Gingle' (Edward Andrewes), 'Slim Slugge, a lazy droane' (John Kidby), 'Epilogue' (Joseph Beaumont) (*Apollo Shroving*, pp. 97-8).

¹⁶³ The other fifteen boys 'seem to have left no deep subsequent impression on even the local records, though four of them, the two Richardsons, John Gale, and Henry Whiting, bear the family names of Mayors of Hadleigh, and George and Henry Meriton may have been related to a former rector' (*Apollo Shroving*, p. 38).

Although the ages of the boys are not recorded, information about the matriculation of those who went on to university does provide some clues to their range of ages. John Kidby was probably one of the oldest performers, matriculating in 1629. If he was 17 or 18 when he matriculated he was approximately 14 or 15 when he performed in *Apollo Shroving*. As Joseph Beaumont and Nicholas Coleman matriculated in 1631-2, they were probably 12 or 13 in 1626, and William Cardinall was possibly 10 or 11, matriculating in 1633.¹⁶⁴

Rehearsal

If the play was 'huddled vp in hast', there was presumably limited time available to prepare for the performance. However, it is possible that the author's claim was an exaggeration, intended to disarm would-be critics of the drama. It would have been customary to rehearse for a public performance and time would have been needed to prepare the required costumes and props for the play. As there was apparently only one copy of the play, it is likely that parts were copied out for the individual boys to memorise.¹⁶⁵

The Audience

We know from E. W.'s account that the audience at the school contained pupils' parents and 'domestique friends', the latter probably alluding to other relations and local people (*Apollo Shroving*, p. 95). Allusions included in the play also suggest that the audience was socially mixed, including men, women, and children of varying ages. For example, the Prologue addresses the audience as, 'Good men, good wives, good maids, good / boyes' (*Apollo Shroving*, Prologue. 20). Other allusions identify the likely social background of some of the spectators. In the Epilogue, the speaker addresses himself to the 'Right worthy Burgomasters, gentle Dames,' suggesting that the audience included civic officials (*Apollo Shroving*, Prologue. 2734). Another reference in the play suggests that the audience might also have included gentry. In Act III, scene 4 Ludio recommends that Lauriger borrow 'one of these Gentlewomens masks' (*Apollo Shroving*, III. 4. 1421). Although it might have been a complimentary form of address only, it is possible that there were 'gentle' women and men in the audience. By Preco's account in Act I, scene 5, the audience also included standing as well as seated spectators (*Apollo Shroving*, I. 5. 1388). This would not have been unusual, but some seating on forms may have been provided closer to the stage.

¹⁶⁴ The apparent mix of ages in the cast could mean that the best performers from each form were chosen for the performance or that the school was small and the cast of twenty represented the entire school population.

¹⁶⁵ E. W. claimed that the copy of the play sent to Robert Milborne was the only one, referring to the schoolmaster 'hauing no other copy of this English Lesson' (*Apollo Shroving*, p. 95).

Staging

The Stage

The play includes several allusions to the 'stage', as noted above, implying that the performance was mounted upon a raised platform. The location and size of the stage is unknown, but it is likely to have been a temporary wooden platform and was probably erected at one end of the schoolroom. It is also possible that a temporary tiring-house was set-up in the room, as at the end of Act I, scene 1, Lala say, 'I'le into the tyreing / house, and scramble and rangle for a mans part' (*Apollo Shroving*, I. 1.195).¹⁶⁶

Costumes and Props

No records of expenses upon costumes or other playing gear survive, but the play's implicit allusion to characters' clothes and various props suggest that the production was costumed and included some stage furniture. The description of Lala as a 'party-coloured chattering Magpy' in the Prologue suggests that Joseph Beaumont may have worn a multi-coloured gown in the role (*Apollo Shroving*, Prologue. 17). Similarly, several allusions indicate that Philoponus appeared in a scholar's black gown (e.g. Lala seeing Philoponus enter at the end of the Prologue says: 'I see a blacke coate come in') (*Apollo Shroving*, Prologue. 126). Implicit allusions, likewise, reveal that Gingle puts on a girdle (Act II, scene 1), wears rosettes on his boots, and wears a hat.¹⁶⁷

As Mistress Indulgence Gingle, George Meriton would have worn a gown, which is described as having dirty lace cuffs (*Apollo Shroving*, IV. 3. 1790). In the same scene she is called to wear a veil as well, Indulgence asking Jugg, 'Do's my Vaile hang in true proportion?' (*Apollo Shroving*, line 1802). Meanwhile, Lauriger is required to wear a blue coat, Ludio addressing him in Act II, scene 4 as 'you i'th blew jacket' (*Apollo Shroving*, II. 4. 1289); and Ludio is implicitly described as wearing a hat and garters, offering to bet them against Siren's apparel (*Apollo Shroving*, III. 5. 1462).

The play's most detailed costume description relates to Siren. Textual allusions indicate that Wentworth Randall would have been wearing a 'silken coate' and carrying a 'golden wand'

¹⁶⁶ It is possible that the boys' temporary tiring-house was another chamber in the guildhall complex, rather than a specially erected 'house' in the schoolroom, but the latter possibility cannot be ruled out.

¹⁶⁷ In Act III, scene 1, Mistress Indulgence notes that 'the rose is ruffled on the top of his spurleather', and tells Jugg Rubbish to 'set it better / with your poking finger' (*Apollo Shroving*, III. 1. 1026). In Act IV, scene 6 reference is made to Gingle's hat (*Apollo Shroving*, IV. 6. 1998).

for the role (*Apollo Shroving*, III. 5. 1461). A long haired blond wig is also implicitly required for the part. When Ludio meets Siren in Act III, scene 5, he alludes to her long locks and addresses her as ‘Gentle goldilockes’ (*Apollo Shroving*, III. 5. 1478). Most demandingly, Siren is described as having a fish tail hidden under her outer garment, revealed in the play’s closing scene.¹⁶⁸

The action of the play takes place in several locations (e.g. outside the temple gates and at Mistress Gingle’s house). It is likely that these were identified through the speech of the characters and the use of appropriate props and items of stage furniture.¹⁶⁹ Most of the props implicitly required for the play are, like the costumes, simple and would have been readily supplied, including books (I. 1. 178; I. 3. 256), Queen Hedone’s letter (II. 3. 767), a roll of paper on a staff (Prologue. 79), a banner (Prologue. 30), a farmer’s fork (IV. 2), a staff (IV. 4. 1842), a satchel (II. 4. 1426), a morris bell (III. 4. 1436), a looking glass (III. 3. 1788).

Some larger and more complex items of stage furniture may have been included in the performance, however. The gate or porch of Apollo’s Temple is alluded to several times, for instance. In the Prologue the speaker says, ‘I’le fixe this banner at Apollos gate’ (*Apollo Shroving*, Prologue. 120), and in Act IV, scene 6 Drudio asks Slug why he will ‘knocke at Apollos gate’, and Slug replies that he ‘dare not knocke at this gate’ (own emphasis) (*Apollo Shroving*, IV.6. 1301). Although the porch or gate could have been imaginatively located off-stage, the latter allusion, in particular implies that the entrance way was physically represented and visible to the audience. A light wooden arch and gate could have been made for the occasion and placed at the rear, or at one side of the stage.¹⁷⁰

A bank is also mentioned several times in the play and is rested upon by two of the characters (Slug and Geron). Again, the boys might have called upon the audience to imagine the mossy bank, but the fact that Slug and Geron are to sit upon it increases the possibility that an item of stage furniture was used to represent it. In Act IV, Geron notes that, ‘this mossy bancke will rest my weary limbs’ (*Apollo Shroving*, IV. 5. 1913). In Act V Slug decides to lie down upon the bank: ‘I am weary of sitting. I think it were better for me to / lye downe vpon this banke’ (*Apollo Shroving*, V. 2. 2226). It need not have been a very sophisticated imitation of a bank. A form covered with green cloth might have been used.

¹⁶⁸ The costuming of the other characters in the play is not described but is likely to have been simple.

¹⁶⁹ Illusionistic scenery of a modern kind was not used in most Jacobean and early Caroline plays, and would not have been required for a performance of *Apollo Shroving*.

¹⁷⁰ If the gateway was placed at the rear of the stage it could have been curtained from view during the play’s interior scenes.

The potentially most sophisticated piece of stage furniture required by the play's action is the tree described as growing next to Apollo's temple. It is also the one prop without which it would have been difficult to stage the play, for as well as being alluded to at several points, in Act I, scene 5, Preco is required to climb the tree: ¹⁷¹

Lau. We shall forfeit our liberties, if wee can get no audience
to listen to our Proclamation. Praeco, vp that bancke, nay
mount vp that tree.

Dru. It is more wholesome mounting that one tree, then some
other three trees compact in a Greeke Pee.

Lau. Seest thou any body now ?
(*Apollo Shroving*, I. 5. 375)

Evidence from the world of the Elizabethan and Jacobean playhouses suggests that prop trees 'practicable for climbing' were not unknown, and are required in other contemporary plays. ¹⁷² Like the gateway to Apollo's Temple, the prop tree might have been set at the rear or side of the stage, allowing the actor's means of ascent to be screened.

Audience Reaction

The epilogue which closes the play calls for the audience to applaud the performance:

Epil. Right worthy Burgomasters, gentle Dames
Accept (we pray) our hasty huddled games,
Who thus imploy our parts, our paines most gladly,
In hope to please our Mother Towne of *Hadley*.
And thus with this our homely shrouing dish,
A merry Shrouetide to you all we wish.
'Tis late. Me thinkes I spye some drowsie head,

¹⁷¹ Geron suggests that he and his son 'retire beside this shady tree' in Act IV, scene v, line 1912. In the play's final scene the tree is also mentioned. The court is to be held 'at the foote of the said hill, vnder the Lawrell, at the / Temple gate' (*Apollo Shroving*, V. 6. 2522). Rhoads also argues that a prop tree is likely to have been used during the school performance: 'As to the actuality of the tree there can be no doubt. A painted representation would not have done, unless there were also a balcony arrangement behind, which there is otherwise no reason to assume. Nor can we believe that Praeco reads the long proclamation which follows from off-stage' (*Apollo Shroving*, p. 37).

¹⁷² A tree that can be ascended is called for in Ben Jonson's, *The Case is Altered*. [Cited in *Apollo Shroving*, p. 36.]

Whose yawning, nodding toles a peale to bed.
 If any such be here, wee'le take them napping,
 And all to boxe their eares with loud hand-clapping. *Plaudite.*
 (*Apollo Shroving*, Epilogue. 2734)

No account of the performance survives to tell us whether the play received this solicited plaudite. However, E. W.'s letter to Robert Milbourne implies that the play was well received, and, presumably, E. W. (or Hawkins) would not have considered publishing the play unless it had proved popular. Indeed, it may have been the play's warm reception upon its performance at the school which prompted Hawkins and / or his friends to think of publishing it.

IV-Drama at the Universities

The Rise of the Universities

When considering the place of drama in the universities of Renaissance England discussion is simplified by the fact that there were only two university towns: Oxford and Cambridge. In both towns the universities found their first roots in the Medieval period. However, it was the sixteenth century which witnessed the flourishing and development of both institutions into the establishments recognisable today.

McConica describes how Oxford changed and developed in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries:

In the early years of the reign of Elizabeth I Oxford still wore the aspect of a medieval market town, whose churches were its principal adornment. Its transformation in the century before 1668 was a consequence of changes which were already under way before the Reformation. [...] At the centre of all these changes - notably, the disappearance of the religious orders, the resort to the university of increasing numbers of laymen, the vast enlargement of royal authority and the expansion of the curriculum- was the secular college, which in the Tudor period replaced the medieval hall as the typical home of the undergraduate. The resulting growth of the colleges in size and influence, and their physical supplanting or

absorption of the medieval halls made Oxford take on, socially and architecturally, the face we know today.¹⁷³

In similar fashion, the collegiate system first came to dominate the organisation of Cambridge University during this period.¹⁷⁴ The sixteenth century was also a period of growth in the university population in both towns. At Oxford the university population in 1562 was between 1,165 - 1,190 members. By the end of the Elizabethan period it had reached 2,000, and from the mid-1620s to the mid 1670s student admissions rose even higher: 'Estimated admissions of students each decade [during this period] [...] only fell below 4,000 in the 1640s'.¹⁷⁵ At Cambridge, 'a university census of 1564 put the number [of members] at 1,267'. By 1570 the population had increased to 1,630, and by 1622, to 3,050.¹⁷⁶

The thriving of the two universities also led to the growth of the towns in which they were founded.¹⁷⁷ The universities' investment with powers over various aspects of town government made them even more important in the life of Cambridge and Oxford, although occasionally it led to conflicts between civic and university authorities over questions of town rule as well.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³ James McConica, 'The Rise of the Undergraduate College', in *The History of the University of Oxford, III: The Collegiate University*, ed. by James McConica (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), 1-68 (pp. 1-2).

Colleges were generally 'endowed, quasi-independent corporations' and functioned as autonomous communities, providing their own living accommodation, dining facilities (in Hall) and a church/chapel. The academic population of colleges was usually 'composed of a head, fellows, and scholars'. [Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, pp. 706-7.]

¹⁷⁴ This dominance was reflected in the fact that 'admission to the University became conditional upon prior admission to a college; from 1586 onwards, moreover, vice-chancellors of the University were always drawn from among the heads of colleges'. [Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 707.] At the same time, the number of colleges grew with the foundation of new establishments (such as Trinity [1564], St John's [1511], Sidney Sussex [1596]).

¹⁷⁵ Nicholas Tyacke, 'Introduction', in *The History of the University of Oxford, IV: Seventeenth Century Oxford*, ed. by Nicholas Tyacke (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 1-25 (p. 2).

¹⁷⁶ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 707.

¹⁷⁷ In Cambridge, 'the town's economy became increasingly tied to the growing university, whose individual members, hostels, and colleges required servants, victuallers, stationers, bookbinders, tailors- suppliers of a wide range of goods and services'. [Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 706.]

¹⁷⁸ At Oxford, for example, the university was responsible for licensing 'brewers and bakers' in the town. While in Cambridge, the university's privileges (as confirmed by a 'new Charter granted by Queen Elizabeth, 26th April, 1561') included being authorised 'as well by day as by night' to 'make scrutiny, search, and inquisition, in the town and suburbs, and in Barnwell and Sturbridge, for all common women, bawds, vagabonds, and other suspected persons.' [Mallett, p. 108. *Club Law*, ed. by G. C. Moore Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1907), p. xiv.]

Mallett describes how in late Elizabethan Oxford, 'the citizens would have clearly liked a monopoly of trade. The University was determined to control it. The University was resolved that the Mayor and fifty-eight burgesses should renew each year the ancient oath to maintain its liberties and customs. The matriculation statute of 1581 took occasion to insist upon it. The citizens who regarded the oath as an infringement of their independence, resisted and evaded it whenever they dared.' [Mallett, p. 109.] Very similar events and occasions of conflict

The Students

Those pupils sent up to matriculate at the universities were sometimes younger than their modern peers. At Oxford, for example, 'matriculations at fourteen were not uncommon'. However, most matriculants 'were aged between 16 and 18 years'.¹⁷⁹ Those wishing to graduate with a BA were theoretically obliged to attend university for four years. This was not always strictly enforced, however. In 1591 at Oxford, for example, 'sons of certain noblemen were allowed to request the BA degree after three years'.¹⁸⁰ Other students might not choose to take the degree and might only attend university for a year or two.¹⁸¹

The numbers of students in different colleges varied, although university-wide we find a clue to the average number of students in each year group in the records of those receiving BAs and MAs.¹⁸² The student body was much larger in some colleges than in others, and was divided into undergraduates and postgraduates, and 'into a number of groups according to the privileges to which their members were entitled [...], determined primarily by social status' (e.g. fellow or gentlemen commoners, commoners and battelers / servitors).¹⁸³ 'The categories varied somewhat between the societies and were not static within each institution'.¹⁸⁴ What groups students joined usually depended on their social background (e.g.

are recorded at Cambridge (e.g. in 1596 the newly elected Mayor, Robert Wallis refused to take the oath for the conservation of the University's privileges'). [Moore Smith in *Club Law*, p. xvii.]

¹⁷⁹ Mallett, p. 141.

Tyacke, p. 2.

¹⁸⁰ J. M. Fletcher, 'The Faculty of Arts', in *The History of the University of Oxford, III: The Collegiate University*, ed. by James McConica (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), 157-199 (p. 165).

¹⁸¹ Preparation for the higher degree of MA theoretically required a further three years of study. [Fletcher, p. 185.]

¹⁸² At Oxford the figures for the end of the Elizabethan period varied but, on the whole, indicate that the student body was growing: 'If we may rely on the figures [collected by Wood], the number of Masters of Arts incepting in the last thirty years of Elizabeth's reign was rarely below 60 and was sometimes over 80, though it fluctuated in a manner rather difficult to understand. It rose to a 104 in 1577. It dropped to 49 in 1597. The Determining Bachelors varied as widely. They numbered 156 in 1587, and a 177 in 1595. In most years they exceeded a 100, and they numbered 200 before the seventeenth century was far advanced.' [Mallett, p. 141.]

¹⁸³ Stephen Porter, 'University and Society', in *The History of the University of Oxford, IV: Seventeenth Century Oxford*, ed. by Nicholas Tyacke (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 25-103 (pp. 35-6).

At Oxford, fellow or gentlemen commoners were usually, 'the sons of the socially elite, defined at Lincoln as "the sons of lords, knights, gentlemen of good place in the commonwealth". They were allowed more elaborate dress than other students and they dined apart from them, at their own or a the fellows' table'. [Porter, pp. 36-7.] Commoners 'were entitled to receive the same quantity of food as the foundationers and to dine at their own table.' They were also expected to 'pay another student of lower rank to carry out [their] menial tasks'. [Porter, p. 37.] The difference between battelers and servitors is apparently not always clear but such students 'were entitled to less than full commons and dined off the "broken meats", or left-overs, in hall. Their duties included serving at mealtimes' and acting as servants for 'the fellow and higher grades of students.' [Porter, p. 37.]

¹⁸⁴ Porter, p. 36.

students from less wealthy backgrounds were more likely to be servitors), while a student's place of origin often influenced which college he attended, students from particular counties and regions often clustering in the same colleges. At Oxford there were 'marked connections' between 'Jesus College and Wales, Exeter College and Devon and Cornwall, Queen's and Cumberland and Westmorland, Brasenose and Cheshire and Lancashire, University College and Yorkshire.'¹⁸⁵

At their inception the students of the universities were 'chiefly young men from poorer economic classes who were encouraged by the church to secure an education in preparation for serving local parishes as [...] priests'.¹⁸⁶ By the late sixteenth century, circumstances appear to have changed, the colleges tending 'to function in practice as societies of privileged graduates' and wealthier students outnumbering poorer ones.¹⁸⁷ The colleges were not, however, the preserve of the nobility. Porter argues that Oxford University drew 'its recruits from a broad spectrum of the community' throughout the seventeenth century, and at Cambridge, matriculants included not only sons from gentry and professional families, but students from merchant and trading families. David Cressey has calculated that '16 % of all Cambridge admissions' in this period were 'made up of sons of tradesmen and merchants [...]; [and] sons of middle- and lower-class rural dwellers accounted for 15 % of the Cambridge student population'.¹⁸⁸

Curriculum

The medieval quadrivium and trivium continued to play an important role in the curriculum of both universities in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period.¹⁸⁹ However, new disciplines had begun to emerge informally. Modern languages are not mentioned in the Elizabethan Oxford statutes, for instance, 'nor did the tutor's manuals of advice make them a requirement.' However, by the early seventeenth century, a number of scholars were becoming competent 'in at least one vernacular language', while at university.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ Porter, p. 60.

¹⁸⁶ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 706.

¹⁸⁷ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 707.

¹⁸⁸ Porter, p. 25.

Cressey's findings as paraphrased in O'Day, p. 104.

¹⁸⁹ Fletcher notes that at Oxford, the 'Elizabethan Statutes preserved the ancient division of knowledge in to the seven liberal arts at a time when such a separation had been seriously modified at Cambridge and totally abandoned in most other European universities.' [Fletcher, p. 172.]

¹⁹⁰ Mordechai Feingold, 'The Humanities', in *The History of the University of Oxford, IV: Seventeenth Century Oxford*, ed. by Nicholas Tyacke (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 211-357 (p. 269).

There was also scope for study of contemporary and innovative scholarship in established fields such as philosophy. Indeed, the curriculum in both universities was more flexible and fluid than is sometimes acknowledged. At Oxford, where the seven liberal arts remained at the centre of the curriculum and the texts prescribed for undergraduates were mainly traditional, classical works, there is evidence of undergraduates studying contemporary texts as well (e.g. Thomas Crosfield's diary [MA 1625] reveals that undergraduates at Queen's College, Oxford were 'free to debate in public topics drawn from recent optical and astronomical discoveries of Galileo and Kepler.')¹⁹¹

Drama 'never had an official position' in the curriculum of early modern Oxford or Cambridge.¹⁹² Dramatic performances were a regular phenomenon, however, in many university colleges by the mid-sixteenth century, and became increasingly frequent during the Elizabethan and Jacobean period (see appendix v for a list of university colleges recorded as hosting play performances, 1559-1625).

The Plays

Language

Most plays performed at Oxford and Cambridge during the Renaissance were written in a classical tongue, usually Latin.¹⁹³ This is not surprising: Latin was the language of learning and international scholarship, and part of the original reason for advocating dramatic exercise at the universities was to improve students' fluency in the ancient tongue. English was, as yet, a little esteemed language and the universities offered no training in its written or spoken use. The impetus to write and perform plays in the vernacular was, consequently, far smaller and fewer vernacular dramas were produced.

In 1592 the Cambridge University authorities even claimed not to have any English plays available for performance before the Queen that Christmas. The explanation they gave is revealing:

how fitt wee shalbe for this that is moued, havinge no practice in this Englishe

¹⁹¹ Mordechai Feingold, 'The Mathematical Sciences and New Philosophies', in *The History of the University of Oxford, IV: Seventeenth Century Oxford*, ed. by Nicholas Tyacke (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 359-448 (p. 392).

¹⁹² John R. Elliott, Jr, 'Drama', in *The History of the University of Oxford, IV: Seventeenth Century Oxford*, ed. by Nicholas Tyacke (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 641-658 (p. 641).

¹⁹³ There are a few records of Greek plays being performed: e.g. John Christopherson's *Jepthes* was mounted at Trinity, Cambridge, 1544. [Boas, *University Drama*, p. 386.]

vaine, and beinge (as we thinke) nothinge beseeminge our students, [...] And do find our principal Actors whome wee haue of purpose called before vs very unwilling to playe in Englishe...Englishe Comedies for that wee neuer vsed any, wee presentlie haue none.¹⁹⁴

The reference to 'seemliness' offers indirect confirmation of the low quality and status accorded the vernacular amongst academics. However, the Cambridge authorities were being economical with the truth when they claimed that their students had never 'vsed' English plays. Plays in the vernacular were mounted at both universities, though some colleges regulated their performance.¹⁹⁵

As early as the 1540s two English comedies (written by Nicholas Grimald) appear to have been performed at Christ Church, Oxford, while, at Cambridge, Martin Bucer wrote of there being 'academic dramas in the vulgar tongue' in 1550.¹⁹⁶ Many more English plays were produced in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, including William Stevenson's (?), *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (performed c.1550-1, Christ's College, Cambridge), Richard Edwardes', *Palamon and Arcyte I & II* (Christ Church, Oxford, 1566) and *Damon and Pythias* (Merton College, Oxford, 1567-8), *Caesar's Revenge* [Anon.] (Trinity College, Oxford, c.1594), *The Parnassus Plays* (Anon.) [*The Pilgrimage to Parnassus, The Return From Parnassus I and II*] (St John's, Cambridge, 1598-1602), George Ruggle (?), *Club Law* (Clare Hall, Cambridge, 1599), and Samuel Daniel's, *The Queen's Arcadia* (Christ Church, Oxford, 1605).¹⁹⁷ In the case of several of these plays, the authors may have been tailoring their plays for the tastes and capacities of a particular audience when they chose to write in English. *Palamon and Arcyte* was prepared for performance before Queen Elizabeth, who was known to prefer English plays. *The Queen's Arcadia* was prepared for Queen Anne and the Ladies of the Court, not all of whom would have been well-versed in Latin.¹⁹⁸ Likewise, in Fuller's account of *Club Law*'s first performance, he suggests that the

¹⁹⁴ Cited in Boas, *University Drama*, p. 323.

¹⁹⁵ In 1621-2 the Corpus Christi College Chapter Books recorded the decision to confine the performance of English plays to specified periods (following a number of controversial productions in the college): 'It was likewise decreed that no stage play which was written in English should be shown on stage except at Christmas time or on the eve or feast of the Purification or on the day before the eve.' [Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 1183.] Notably, performances were not being prohibited, but regulated.

¹⁹⁶ Boas, *University Drama*, p. 386.

¹⁹⁷ Boas, *University Drama*, pp. 386-90.

¹⁹⁸ Nelson, speaking of the presence of women in Cambridge audiences, argues that their attendance increased 'the pressure for plays in English. [...] Even Latin plays might include important concessions to those, including most of the women in the audience, who did not speak the scholars' tongue: *Ignoramus*, for example, includes several scenes, principally in the fourth act,

play was written in English 'to be understood' by the townspeople allegedly present in the audience and satirised in the play.¹⁹⁹

Varieties of play

The plays produced at the universities during the sixteenth century were predominantly classical or pseudo-classical works, as noted above (p. 98). The taste for particular playwrights such as Terence is reflected in some of the surviving college costume inventories. Sandra Billington notes that in the 1562 inventory from St John's, Cambridge 'all the characters named' on Fol. 255r 'except for "the kinge" could come from plays by Terence.'²⁰⁰

However, the plays performed in the early part of the century were not exclusively classical. The evidence of extant costume inventories suggests that medieval native dramas (such as Morality plays) were staged occasionally as late as the middle of the century. The costume inventories of St John's from 1556-7 and 1562 contain a number of entries 'appropriate to the costuming of Morality drama, such as the fools' coats and "dagger of wodd" (66v), and the devil's and death's costumes'.²⁰¹

Similarly, the neo-classical plays which were produced during the sixteenth century occasionally fused elements of classical drama with elements drawn from native theatrical genre, such as moral interludes. Hence, while *Gammer Gurton's Needle* is classical in form (e.g. conforming to the celebrated five-act structure of a model Roman comedy), in its content and characterizations it borrows more obviously from English plays (e.g. Diccon's role is akin to that of a Vice in a Morality play).

From the 1560s onwards, the kinds of play performed at the two universities appear to have become more varied (although they continued to be primarily classical in language). As well as conventional Terentian and Plautine comedies and Senecan tragedies we find scholars producing plays based on biblical history (e.g. Udall's, *Ezechias*) and medieval romance (e.g. Edwardes', *Palamon and Arcyte*).

which are entirely in English'. [Alan H. Nelson, 'Women in the Audience of Cambridge Plays', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 41 (1990), 333-336 (p. 335).]

¹⁹⁹ Moore Smith in *Club Law*, p. liv.

²⁰⁰ Sandra Billington, 'Sixteenth Century Drama in St. John's College, Cambridge', *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 29 (1978), 1-10 (p. 9).

²⁰¹ Billington, p. 9.

In the 1580s and '90s other new genres began to emerge. University playwrights began producing topical satires (e.g. Thomas Mudde found himself in prison after writing a play attacking the Mayor in 1582-3), italianate romances and pastorals (such as *Laelia* 'which was performed for the Earl of Essex at Queen's in 1594-5', and '*Pastor Fidus*, which may have been performed at King's, c.1604-5'), and English history plays (e.g. Thomas Legge's *Richardus Tertius*, probably first performed in 1579-80 at St John's, Cambridge).²⁰²

Notably, these same genres were fashionable, to varying extents, on the public stages of London, suggesting that there may have been some cross-fertilization of ideas. However, determining whether the playwrights of the popular stage were borrowing from the academic or vice-versa is difficult. In some cases, there is fairly clear evidence of borrowing. The anonymous *Tragedy of Caesar's Revenge* (performed c.1594 in Trinity College, Oxford) is written in a style modelled on the revenge tragedies popular in London in 'the last decade of the sixteenth century'. It even incorporates lines from a number of successful public plays, including Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* (e.g. Cassius echoes Tamburlaine's words in Part I, Act II, scene 3, when he describes the troupes as being 'in sun-bright armes').²⁰³

In other cases the pattern of influence is harder to identify. For example, the university stage was, arguably, the home of the first English history play - Thomas Legge's *Richardus Tertius* - but whether this play had any direct influence upon those playwrights who were to produce the famous history plays of the 1580s on the London stage is difficult to know. In the same way it is almost impossible to know whether the turn of the century taste for satirical and topical plays at Oxford and Cambridge was inspired by the flourishing of satirical dramas in the theatres of London, or whether the vogue was part of a common cross-cultural fashion for satire.

Some academic playwrights and audiences were certainly interested in the popular stage at this date, as is manifested in the last play of the *Parnassus* trilogy, produced at St John's, Cambridge (1602). In this play two characters (Ingenioso and Iudicio) discuss the merits of various contemporary writers, including a number of playwrights for the public theatre (e.g. Shakespeare, Jonson, Marston); and Richard Burbage and William Kemp, two of the period's

²⁰² Cited in Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 713.

Boas, *University Drama*, p. 112.

²⁰³ Anon., *The Tragedy of Caesar's Revenge*, ed. by F. S. Boas and W. W. Greg (Oxford: Oxford University, 1911), p. ii.

Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine* in *The Complete Works*, ed. by J. B. Leishman (London: Penguin, 1984), pp. 124-5.

most famous professional players, are brought on-stage to audition two students for their acting company [Act IV, sc. 4]. The treatment these representatives of the public stage receive is intriguing. Shakespeare is criticised for his preoccupation with love, and the actors are satirised as being ignorant.²⁰⁴ As Boas observes:

It is in a spirit of the bitterest irony that [the author] shows the illiterate pair, who speak of 'that writer *Ovid*, and that writer *Metamorphoses*', putting Cambridge scholars through their paces, and impudently asserting that 'few of the vniuersity men pen plaies well'.²⁰⁵

The satire intended is made explicit when the protagonists reject a career as players and overtly condemn the profession as 'the basest trade'.²⁰⁶

Nonetheless, while the play ridicules professional players and playwrights such as Shakespeare, as a satire of the popular stage the play is ambiguous in its effect. That the playwright chooses to make professional players and playwrights part of his theme immediately invests them with a degree of importance and status. Similarly, it testifies to the widespread fame and success they were enjoying, and the fact that university academics were *au fait* with events and fashions in the world of London public theatre. Indeed, as Boas suggests, the 'glimpses of professional actors and playwrights' afforded by the author are mediated 'through eyes that are half jealous', as well as 'half contemptuous'.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ Iudicio asks: 'who loues not *Adonis* loue, or *Lucrece* rape?/ His sweeter verse contaynes hart robbing lines, / Could but a grauer subiect him content/ Without loues foolish lazy languishment'. [*The Return From Parnassus*, II in *The Three Parnassus Plays (1598-1601)*, ed. by J. B. Leishman (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1949), I. 2. 300, p. 244.]

²⁰⁵ Boas, *University Drama*, p. 344.

²⁰⁶ Boas, *University Drama*, p. 343.

In the following scene of *The Return from Parnassus*, II (V.1) Studioso offers a further attack upon professional players (including an allusion to their legal association with vagabonds under the Tudor Poor Laws): 'Better it is mongst fiddlers to be chiefe, / Than at [a] plaiers trencher beg reliefe. [...] / Vile world, that lifts them vp to hye degree, / And treads vs downe in groueling misery./ England affordes those glorious vagabonds, / That carried ears and fardels on their backes, / Coursers to ride on through the gazing streetes, / Sooping it in their glowing satten sutes, / And Pages to attend their maisterships' (V. 1. 1916, 1919).

²⁰⁷ F. S. Boas, *An Introduction to Tudor Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), p. 56.

The *Return's* (II) author even allows Shakespeare's words what may have been their only airing upon an academic stage when he calls Philomusus to deliver a speech from *Richard the Third* as an audition piece: 'Now is the winter of our discontent / Made glorious summer by the sonne of Yorke, [&c.].' [*The Return to Parnassus*, II (IV. 4. 1838).] The author's choice of this speech suggests that it had become a much quoted speech as early as 1602. Its inclusion also assumes the audience's knowledge of the play, further testifying to Shakespeare's fame and academics' familiarity with London theatrical fashions.

That the popular stage and the academic stage should have occasionally exerted influence upon each other is not as surprising as it might first appear. There were links between the two worlds. Although the motives and auspices for commercial and academic theatre were different, there was common ground between them. A number of authors writing for the public theatres of Elizabethan and Jacobean England were university graduates (e.g. Marlowe, Marston, Peele, Heywood). Their ideas as dramatists were likely to have been informed by their experiences as students (including their possible participation in academic performances as players or spectators).

Similarly, there were opportunities for university performers and authors to learn from the public stage when graduates, turned public playwrights, were recruited to manage the production of college performances or were invited to provide plays for special occasions such as royal visits (e.g. George Peele was paid for helping to prepare the plays to be performed at his old college for the entertainment of the Polish Prince, Albertus Alasco during his Oxford visit in 1583). In these cases, the assistance of London-based playwrights was presumably sought because of the professional knowledge and expertise they were expected to possess.

Authors

In addition to classical plays written by ancient authors, the university students mounted plays by contemporaries. Some of the plays performed were written by continental authors (e.g. Sixt Bick's, *Sapientia Solomonis* and W. Gnapheus' *Acolastus*). More usually, contemporary college plays 'were written by members of the societies in whose halls they were performed'.²⁰⁸ These university authors included students and members of the teaching body. *The Pilgrimage to Parnassus* appears to have been written by a student of St John's, while, Legge's *Richardus Tertius* was performed at St John's while he was Master of Gonville and Caius.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ Boas, *University Drama*, p. 85.

²⁰⁹ Allusions to the author of *The Pilgrimage to Parnassus* in the prologue to the first part of *The Return* suggest that he was a student when he wrote the play and that he was temporarily 'stayed' from gaining his degree following its performance: *Stagekeeper*. Surelie it made our poet a staide man, / kepte his proude necke from baser lambskins weare, / Had like to haue made him senior sophister. / He was faine to take his course by Germanie/ Ere he coude gett a silie poore degree' (Prologue, line 5).

It is probably no coincidence that a number of academic playwrights emerged from grammar schools with a reputation for dramatic activity. Shrewsbury School produced Abraham Fraunce (author of *Victoria*, produced at St John's in 1582) and Thomas Tomkis (author of *Albumazar*, performed before James during his visit to Cambridge in 1615). [Oldham, p. 288.] It is also

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An author's play would usually be performed in his own college, although, as the example of Legge's play demonstrates, this was not always the case. Likewise, plays were sometimes written by ex-university students, as when Edwardes' *Damon and Pythias* was performed at Merton College in 1568. Similarly, in 1564 one of the plays with which Queen Elizabeth was entertained at King's College Chapel was *Ezechias*, written by Nicholas Udall (see plate 24). In this case, Udall was not a Cambridge scholar but an Oxford graduate. However, the choice of his play may have been prompted by indirect associations with the college of another sort: 'this posthumous revival of one of his plays at Cambridge suggests that it was a composition of his Eton period familiar to some of those who had passed from the school to the allied society of King's'.²¹⁰ Sometimes colleges even appear to have commissioned plays from graduates, as when Richard Edwardes was asked to provide plays for the royal visit to Oxford in 1566.

Performances

Occasions

The auspices for university performances varied, as is true of school productions. Plays might be performed as part of academic exercises, to coincide with festivities (e.g. at Christmas), or as entertainment for important guests. Performances for Royal visitors and other university guests were organised and staged rather differently from standard, internal college productions. Plays prepared for university guests are therefore treated separately. To distinguish between the two kinds of performance I shall describe those productions organised for university guests as 'university' plays, and those organised within colleges for their own entertainment as 'college plays'. The following section will concentrate upon the customs surrounding college plays. Section ii will look at university plays. To illustrate the general survey of university playing practices and performances offered in sections i and ii, the final section of the chapter offers a case study of a specific performance.

interesting that a number of university trained men went on to write plays after leaving university, even though they had not produced any recorded plays while students. Some wrote for the popular stage. Others composed plays for provincial civic production (e.g. Thomas Ashton, one time scholar of St John's, Cambridge and headmaster of Shrewsbury School, was famous for his 'neo-miracle' plays, produced at the 'quarry' in Shrewsbury, such as *Julian the Apostate*, 1566). [*Annals of English Drama, 975-1700*, ed. by Alfred Harbage, revised by S. Schoenbaum, (London: Methuen, 1964) pp. 36-7]. There are also records of several university graduates producing 'closet' dramas (e.g. Fulke Greville's neo-classical dramas, such as *Mustapha* [1594] and *Antony and Cleopatra* [1601]). [Harbage, pp. 60-1, pp. 80-1.]

²¹⁰ Boas, cited in Jerry White, p. 7.

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i. College plays

Places

When the place of performance is stated in college records it is generally the 'hall'. College dining halls were a natural venue for such entertainments. Their primary function defined them as communal spaces and they were generally the largest indoor space available in a college. Most college dining halls, like the banqueting halls of the Tudor palaces and private noble houses, were modelled on the design of the Medieval Great hall. Generally rectangular, the upper end would be fitted with a dais and High Table, while there was often a screen at the lower end.²¹¹ Tables and benches might be arranged in the main body of the hall, parallel with the length of the hall. Sometimes there was also a central fireplace. While sharing a common design, the size and luxuriousness of college halls varied considerably. For example, at Christ's College, Cambridge the hall measured 53 3/4 feet x 26 feet externally, while the hall at St John's measured 70 feet by 30 feet including the screen, before its enlargement in 1865, and at Trinity College, Cambridge, the hall built by Neville in the early seventeenth century was 103 feet x 40 feet.²¹² Larger again is the hall which survives at Christ Church College, Oxford, measuring c. 115 feet by 40 feet (see plate 26).²¹³

Other spaces were used for some performances: for example, the chapel was used for several plays in 1567-8 and 1568-9 at Jesus College, Cambridge ('iiij li vj s.' was recorded in the Audit books as having been 'spent at the playes in the Chappell').²¹⁴ In this instance, the chapel may have been an attractive venue because of its large dimensions, the chancel measuring 64 feet by 23 1/4 feet, and the nave measuring 33 3/4 feet by 24 feet (see plate 27). The chancel alone was larger than the college hall (measuring c. 50 1/2 feet by 25 feet).²¹⁵

A number of references are, likewise, made to performances in private rooms such as master's lodges. At Merton College, performances were staged in the warden's house. In

²¹¹ In later halls the screen 'might be roofed in and railed, forming a "minstrels' gallery" above, overlooking the body of the hall'. [Alan H. Nelson, 'Hall Screens and Elizabethan Playhouses: Counter Evidence From Cambridge', in *The Development of Shakespeare's Theater*, ed. by John H. Astington (New York: AMS Press, 1992), 57-76 (p. 74).]

²¹² *Royal Commission on Historical Monuments: An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of Cambridge*, I (London: HMSO, 1959), p. 32.
The Architectural History of the University of Cambridge, ed. by Robert Willis and John Willis Clark, 4 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1886; repr. 1988), II, p. 308.
The Buildings of England: Cambridgeshire, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner, 3rd edn (London: Penguin, 1954; repr. 1977), p. 170.

²¹³ John Orrell, *The Human Stage: English Theatre Design, 1567-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1988), p. 126.

²¹⁴ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 254.

²¹⁵ The hall at Jesus was extended by approximately thirteen feet to make it its present size (64 feet by 25 feet) in 1875. [*RCHM: Cambridge*, I, p. 86, p. 88, pp. 92-3.]

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1566, for example, reference is made in the College Register to Terence's *Eunuchus* being performed in 'aedibus custodis', and in 1567-8 *Damon and Pythias* was staged in 'domo custodis'.²¹⁶ In these instances it is likely that the plays were performed in the hall to be found in the warden's lodgings. Similarly, a comedy appears to have been performed in the president's lodge of Magdalen College, Oxford in 1614-5. A pound was paid to 'Magistro Powell pro expensis in commaedia habita in hospitio Domini Presidis'.²¹⁷

Performers

College plays were normally acted 'by members of a single college.'²¹⁸ The performers could be drawn from all classes of the academic body, ranging from 'recently matriculated students' to 'older fellows, scholars, bachelors' and 'Masters of Arts.'²¹⁹ A number of those involved in acting at the universities may have been experienced performers, having acted in boy productions at their schools (e.g. the five ex-Shrewsbury school boys who performed in Abraham Fraunce's *Victoria* were probably accustomed to performing having been involved in the regular declamation and performance of plays at their school).

Scholars were not usually 'paid for acting', although an entry recorded in the accounts of Trinity's steward at Cambridge in 1609-10 could represent an exception. Five shillings was 'given to the Actors in *Andrea* by the vicemaisters appoyntment'.²²⁰ However, college players may have been presented occasionally with monetary rewards by members of the audience (as was sometimes the case following school-boy performances). More usually, if the performers received any compensation for playing it appears to have been in the form of food and drink (e.g. in 1559-60 'ij s.' was allowed by the Trinity College steward 'to the bachelors breakfast for there tragidye', and in 1561-2 the college allowed 'x s.' for 'v playes to ye players breakfastes').²²¹

²¹⁶ Elliott, *REED: Oxford University*, forthcoming.

²¹⁷ Alton, p. 61.

²¹⁸ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 721.

²¹⁹ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 721.

Occasionally college accounts explicitly record the nature of the performers: e.g. in 1590-1 at Christ Church, Oxford 'xxs' was paid 'To the Bachilers when they played octavia'. [Alton, p. 69]. Similarly, in 1580-1 twenty shillings was given by St John's College, Oxford 'vnto the Bachilers in Consid[er]acon of an interlude', and in 1598-9 the same college allowed money 'p[ro] co[m]moedia et tragoedia acta p[er] scholares et conuictores'. [Elliott, *REED: Oxford University*, forthcoming.]

²²⁰ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 421.

Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 721.

²²¹ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 209 and p. 215.

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Audiences

Sometimes plays were performed solely for the recreation of the students and staff of the host college. Some colleges insisted that plays be confined to performance before college members. The 1573-4 statutes of Gonville and Caius 'forbade attendance at plays outside the college' and advocated private productions. The college stated that they wished college comedies or tragedies 'to be private, if there are any.'²²² Other contemporary evidence indicates that college performances could be more public and their audiences, consequently, more mixed.²²³ Some colleges describe specific performances as having been publicly acted. In 1603-4 at St John's College (Oxford), for example, the accounts allude to 'A tragedy of Hippolitus acted publickly'.²²⁴

It is not unusual to find members of other colleges attending performances in neighbouring colleges. An entry in the 1560-1 Trinity College Buttery accounts suggests that the college's students attended a play at King's: 'This night in this yere the bacche~~l~~ars hadd no candles bicause the playe[s] thate wa[re] at the Kynges Colledg as vpon this night'.²²⁵ On some occasions the attendance of students from neighbouring colleges was not welcomed, as is demonstrated by the rioting which occurred in Cambridge when students from St John's were prevented from attending Trinity College performances in 1610-11 (students from other colleges were admitted).²²⁶

Townpeople also appear to have attended some performances. The leading Cambridge townsmen and their wives are reputed to have been invited to the performance of *Club Law* at Clare Hall (1599-1600), for example. Fuller reports in his history of the University, that, 'Clare-Hall was the place wherein it was acted, and the Major, with his Brethren, and their wives, were invited to behold it, or rather themselves abused therein'.²²⁷ There is evidence of civic dignitaries being specially invited to performances on other occasions as well, as when Christ's College (Cambridge) paid '32 s. 3 1/2 d.' towards 'ye honeste entertaynmente of ye

²²² The statute is translated from Latin. [Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 1147.]
Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 754.

²²³ The comedy performance recorded in Jesus College, Cambridge in 1577-8 possibly had a more mixed audience as reference is made to its having been 'pleyed publicklye in the Hawle this Christmas'. [Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 280.]

²²⁴ Elliott, *REED: Oxford University*, forthcoming.

²²⁵ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 212.

²²⁶ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 1031.

Nelson records how, 'late in the afternoon of Ash Wednesday', 6 February, 'Trinity College stage keepers treated kindly those playgoers who came to the college from the south by way of Great St. Mary's Church; but they offered rough treatment to those coming from the north by way of St. John's'. [Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 1031.]

²²⁷ Fuller, cited in *Club Law*, p. xl.

Wershippes' of the Town and the University 'wch resorted to or colledge to see ye plaies there' in 1552-3.²²⁸

College audiences could also be of mixed gender, as revealed indirectly in the account of *Club Law*'s performance. As Alan Nelson notes:

College performances with mixed audiences were remembered by John Milton, who inveighed against them in his *Apology for Smectynmus*, complaining against students of divinity 'prostituting the shame of that ministry which either they had, or were nigh having, to the eyes of courtiers, and court-Ladies, with their Groomes and Mademoiselles'.²²⁹

As in the indoor theatres of London, the spectators at college plays were generally seated either on forms/benches or on specially built scaffolds of seating.²³⁰ In some cases the arrangement of the seating and the distribution of the audience may have been hierarchical, the most privileged or prestigious spectators being granted seats closer to (or sometimes on) the stage. On other occasions the distribution of spectators was evidently less rigidly hierarchical. The account of *Club Law*'s performance at Clare Hall is revealing in this respect (if factual), for it suggests that the townspeople sat in the midst of students: 'A convenient place was assigned to the Towns-folk (rivetted in with Schollars on all sides) where they might see and be seen'.²³¹

The figures attending college and university performances are generally unknown, although an audience as large as two thousand people is reported to have been gathered in Trinity College hall at Cambridge on at least one occasion.²³² Entertaining such a large audience was only possible because Trinity's hall was spacious in its dimensions, measuring 103 feet x 40 feet x 50 feet, like its model the Middle Temple Hall (see plate 28).²³³ Few other university

²²⁸ Boas, *University Drama*, p. 25.

²²⁹ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 335.

²³⁰ Such scaffolds were built in colleges in preparation for the performances staged during the royal visit of James in 1612-3, as is revealed indirectly in the Tabor's Book, where reference is made to 'ye [...] Scaffolds below the stage' set up in the hall. [Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 502.]

²³¹ Thomas Fuller, cited in *Club Law*, p. xl.

²³² Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 539.

²³³ Nelson suggests that: 'The splendor of Nevill's architectural program was probably related to the desire of Cambridge to attract royal visitors and to provide a proper setting for all requisite events, including college plays. It seems likely [...] that Trinity College hall was originally built with play production in mind, and that the room beyond the upper end wall was intended from the start for a tiring house'. [Nelson, 'Hall Screens and Elizabethan Playhouses', p. 65.]

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halls were of comparable dimensions and typical play audiences are likely to have been much smaller, numbering hundreds at most.

Audience Behaviour

The entry and seating of spectators at college performances was supervised in many colleges by officials called 'stage-keepers': 'they wore smart dress, sometimes a visor or steel cap, and carried links to guide the guests of the college across the dark court'.²³⁴ Moore Smith compares them to modern stewards. They may also have served a role as preservers of order. Many of the stage-keepers were students, but occasionally townsmen were employed as well (e.g. the stage-keepers at Trinity, Cambridge in 1611 were almost all members of the college. The one exception was Daniel Boyes, a local bookbinder).²³⁵

A less overt form of audience regulation existed in those colleges which passed orders prohibiting certain kinds of behaviour at plays in the Jacobean period. In 1622-3 an order was recorded in Tabor's Book regulating the way in which scholars were allowed to respond to the plays (and disputations) to be mounted at Trinity College (Cambridge) during the visit of 'ye nobles'. It demanded that 'ye grosse, and rude disorder of hawkinge, and humminge at Comodyes, and disputacions be altogeather forborne vppon paine of whippinge, and imprisonment, and further punishment'.²³⁶ By implication, these were practices indulged in by earlier college audiences, indicating that the reception of college plays was sometimes rowdy, as was true of popular performances in London.²³⁷

Organising play productions

Responsibility for organising college play performances was delegated in varying ways. For those plays performed privately or on a small-scale, the evidence suggests that it was common to elect people (or sometimes an individual) to manage the production of one or

²³⁴ Moore Smith, *College Plays*, p. 46.

²³⁵ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 431.

²³⁶ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 586.

²³⁷ Later university statutes reveal that audience behaviour was subject to even more rigorous regulation. At Cambridge in 1628-9 another order in Tabor's Book required, 'yat neither at their standing on the Regent walke before named, nor before ye Comoedy begin, nor all the tyme therof, any rude, and immodest exclamations be made, nor anye humminge, hawkeinge, whistlinge, hisseinge, or laughinge be vsed, nor any stampinge, or knocking, nor any other such uncivill, or vnschollerlike, and boyish demeanor vppon any occasion: nor yat any clapping of hands be had, vntill ye Plaudite at ye end of ye comoedy, except the Chancellor or ye Emassador, and ye best of quality there, doe apparently begin ye same'. [Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 620.]

more plays.²³⁸ This would appear to be the case at Trinity College, Cambridge (in the Elizabethan period) when we find payments such as the following from 1559-60: xxxij s. iiij d. was paid to 'Mr oxenbridge for Oedipus', viij s. xd. to 'Mr Abithnett for both the english plaies', vj s. to 'Mr Hawys for Mostellaria', xij s. vd. to 'Mr Penny for Sapientia Solomonis, and xlxs. to 'Sir Redmaine for Hecuba'.²³⁹ Similar payments occur in the records of Oxford colleges, as when iiij s. ijd. was paid by Christ Church in 1584-5 'to mr maxie layde forth by him whê ye comedie was playing ye seconde tyme'.²⁴⁰

Meanwhile, in colleges where plays were staged as part of holiday festivities, a Christmas Lord or Prince might be elected and placed in charge of organising all the entertainments during the holiday period. Some colleges's statutes specified the class of scholar to be elected to such posts. At Cambridge, 'the same statutes of 1545 which provide that at St John's every fellow should in turn 'act the lord', also provide [...] that the other comedies and tragedies to be acted between Twelfth Day and Lent should be provided by the several lecturers and examiners in turn'.²⁴¹

Financing Plays

The importance with which many colleges treated the production of plays is implicitly revealed by the sometimes large amounts of money expended upon them (e.g. Christ Church, Oxford spent £36 11s 3d. upon 'a comedy and a tragedy' in 1584-5).²⁴² The ways in which college plays were financed varied. In both Cambridge and Oxford, colleges often provided part or all of the funding for those performances recorded.²⁴³ Whether scholars performed many plays at their own cost is not known. Scholars certainly contributed to the production costs of plays in some colleges (e.g. in 1601-2 at St John's, Oxford, 'iij li xijs ijd' was 'alowed by the house toward the Tragedye ouer and aboue iij li put on the students

²³⁸ In some cases the scholar who organised the performance was the play's author..

²³⁹ Moore Smith, *College Plays*, p. 22.

Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 208.

These could be payments for the preparation of play texts but the fact that several are unoriginal works increases the likelihood that all these payments represent rewards or reimbursements for the organisation of their production.

²⁴⁰ Alton, p. 67.

²⁴¹ Moore Smith, *College Plays*, pp. 20-1.

²⁴² Alton, p.39.

Alton notes that 'it could be argued that this was a special occasion, that a special effort was made for the visit of the Chancellor, and no doubt this was, in fact, the case; but in 1581 when so far as is known there was no visitor of importance, the same college paid £16 14s. 3d. for its plays in total outgoings of £2,600 35s. 10 1/4/d.' [Alton, p. 39.]

²⁴³ Here, we may be victims of a historical distortion. Our main source of evidence about college performances are the financial records of colleges. Consequently, most of the performances we know about are college-funded. This does not mean that other performances were not staged.

heade').²⁴⁴ Commenting upon the records of Oxford, Alton argues that 'a contribution was often, if not always levied upon members of the college and it may well be that in some years the money so received was enough to pay for the play or plays'.²⁴⁵

Rehearsals

Rehearsals appear to have been a usual preparation for college performances before private or public audiences. In some colleges, rooms were specifically allocated for use as rehearsal spaces: for example, at Cambridge, 'Trinity College had a "repeating Chamber" (1613-14), [...] while Queen's College had an "Acting chamber" [...] (1637-8)'.²⁴⁶ The rehearsal process 'might be very time-consuming', as is demonstrated by a record from Christ's College, Cambridge. In 1552-3 xj s. was 'spente in coales at sondrie rehersinges of ye tragedie between christenmas and fastingham: and in ye plaie time'. As Nelson notes, 'Shrove Tuesday, here called "fastingham" [...] fell on 14 February this year, making for a rehearsal period of about six weeks'.²⁴⁷

Performances

Times of Performances

Many college plays were performed in the evening. At St John's College, Oxford, in 1599-1600 there was an 'Interlud[e] the Que<.>es night', for example, and in 1601-2 there was in the same college an 'Interlude at dinner vpon New yaresday & a co[m]medy vpon twelfnight'.²⁴⁸ However, play performances in the day were not unknown.²⁴⁹

Staging and the Preparation of Playing Places

Stages

From the 1550s onward it became usual for professional players to perform on stages. The same fashion appears to have prevailed in the universities. The 'first direct reference to a stage in all interlude scripts, so far as extant plays are concerned' occurs on the title page of a university play. *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, originally performed c. 1550-1, was published in

²⁴⁴ Alton, p. 81.

²⁴⁵ Alton, p. 34.

²⁴⁶ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 718.

²⁴⁷ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 718 and p. 1210.

²⁴⁸ Elliott, *REED: Oxford University*, forthcoming.

²⁴⁹ For example, a performance staged at St John's College, Cambridge in 1578-9 may have been performed in the day, a payment being made 'ffor nettes to hange before the windows of ye Hall', apparently to make the hall artificially dark. [Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 284.]

1575 as: 'A Ryght Pithy, Pleasaunt and Merie comedie [...]: Played on stage, not longe ago in *Christes Collegde in Cambridge*'.²⁵⁰

Payments for the preparation of stages are commonplace in college records of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period. Indeed, as Boas notes, 'the erection of the stage in the hall was usually the most formidable expense' (e.g. William Pickhaver received several payments in 1581-2 from Christ Church, Oxford for work on the stage, including ix s. viijd. paid 'to him for worke done in the walkes about the stage').²⁵¹

In their simplest form, college stages were demountable wooden platforms (probably rectangular in shape).²⁵² Some colleges (especially in the seventeenth century) commissioned more elaborate constructions. At Queen's College, Cambridge in 1639-40, 'a demountable theatre, built entirely of scaffolding materials, was erected in the hall. [...] The stage platform was situated in the far or upper end of the hall, near the dais. On either side of the stage were tiring houses [...]. Galleries for the audience were erected against the back wall above the stage, against the two side walls, and against the entrance screen'.²⁵³

Materials for the stages might be purchased specially or hired, and they were generally prepared by a 'team of carpenters' who would typically spend 'from two to five days erecting the stages and taking them down again' (e.g. at Trinity, Cambridge in 1559-60 vs. was paid to 'William Hardwick for vj. dayes in setting vp and taking downe of ye stage', while 'his man' was paid iiij s for 'vj. Dayes').²⁵⁴ Stages of grander proportions might involve more extended preparation. The platform built for the Trinity College, Cambridge performances of 1570-1 appears to have been a particularly large and sophisticated stage, a large body of craftsmen being drafted in to work on its construction. In the Junior Bursar's Accounts, payments were made to William Hardwick and four other carpenters on the 10th February. These were followed on the 22nd February by a further series of payments to carpenters for work upon

²⁵⁰ Richard Southern, 'The Techniques of Play Presentation' in *The Revels History of Drama in England, 1500-1576*, II, ed. by Norman Sanders, Richard Southern, T. W. Craik & Lois Potter (London: Methuen, 1980), 69-99 (p. 94).

Mr. S. Mr. of Art [William Stevenson (?)], *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, ed. by H. F. B. Brett-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1939), p. v.

²⁵¹ Boas, *University Drama*, p. 20.

Alton, p. 62.

²⁵² While the evidence of stages such as that erected in Queen's College, Cambridge (1639-40) and textual references to the 'corners' of the stage indicate that academic stages were generally rectangular or square in shape, there may have been exceptions.

²⁵³ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 717.

²⁵⁴ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, pp. 717-8.
Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 208.

the stage. Thomas Watson was paid for 'x daies about ye stage, William Parkin for 'ix daies', D. Butcher for 'iij daies', William Dawsce for 'iiij daies' and George Sterne for 'iij daies'. A further fourteen pence was 'given amonge them for ther paines taking in the night aboute ther wages'.²⁵⁵

Once erected the stages might be further 'enhanced by the skill of painters'. At Cambridge such work is 'first recorded in the accounts of King's College for the disguising of 1484-5.' In 1614-15 members of Clare College paid 'the enormous sum of £23 6s 8d' to 'ye painter' as part of their preparations for the performance of *Ignoramus*.²⁵⁶ Similarly, at Christ Church, Oxford, it appears that painters were employed about the stage in 1584-5, xviijs being paid 'To Henrie Clincke, Raph Clincke, and Roger More for payntinge eych of them two dayes and two nighte and halfe a day'.²⁵⁷

The usual location of the stages used in academic performances has been a subject of controversy. In the earlier part of this century many scholars argued that performances were generally mounted at the lower end of hall spaces, using the screen often found at this end as a tiring house and the entrances as entry and exit points for the stage. More recent researchers have challenged this assumption, closer examination of archival evidence indicating that stages were generally erected in the upper part of halls. At Cambridge, for example, the 1640 Queens' College stage was explicitly situated 'near the upper end of the hall, away from the screens', and at Trinity the 'Orders and Monitions' issued by the vice-chancellor between 1612-13 and 1635-6 repeatedly refer to the 'stage, & ye scaffold aboue at ye end of ye hall'.²⁵⁸ Other arguments have been advanced in support of the hypothesis that upper end performances were usual. Performances against college screens could have presented practical problems. The lower end of the hall usually 'served as the principal entrance to the hall [...] staging a play hard against the screens would either block this normal means of access and egress, or would restrict the stage platform to the width of the space between the doors'.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 261.

The payment of the carpenters for working in the night suggests that the preparation of the stage was rather rushed, possibly taking longer than originally anticipated.

²⁵⁶ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 719.

Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 530.

²⁵⁷ Alton, p. 66.

²⁵⁸ Nelson, 'Hall Screens and Elizabethan Playhouses', pp. 69-70.

²⁵⁹ Nelson, 'Hall Screens and Elizabethan Playhouses', pp. 69-70.

Given that screens were typically 'ornately decorated' in this period as well, it is 'difficult to believe that they were routinely and deliberately subjected to the hard use virtually inevitable in the course of a dramatic performance'. [Nelson, 'Hall Screens and Elizabethan Playhouses', p. 70.]

Performances at the upper end of the hall would have made more sense symbolically as well, the upper end being the area 'of the hall most associated with display.'²⁶⁰ It was also the region in which the most important guests were generally located. As Nelson observes:

Halls of all kinds were constructed with social hierarchies in mind. Normally, the higher orders sat at the higher end, the lower orders at the lower end. The logical place for performances was the space just in front or at the sides of the high table. A performance at the lower end of the hall would be less accessible to the head of the household and to guests seated on the dais at the upper end of the hall, and might well be thought to violate proprieties.²⁶¹

Lighting

Artificial lighting was essential for night performances and college records contain frequent payments for candles and torches (and, occasionally, lanterns). It could be an expensive provision. In Oxford, for example, in 1568-9 St John's spent xxxijs. on 'x dossen pound of great candels for ye plaies'. Meanwhile, in Cambridge, Trinity College spent viijd on 'a greate nosell for ye stage lantehorne'.²⁶²

Costumes

Academic performances were generally staged in costume. Some colleges even maintained a wardrobe of costumes.²⁶³ The inventories of such colleges reveal that attire was available for all kinds of characters. The 1550-1 inventory of playing clothes from Trinity College, Cambridge includes men's outfits (such as 'a Iyrkyn of grene and blewe veluet'), women's attire (such as 'an ouer bodie for women of grene & sad grene veluet with sleues') and miscellaneous items (e.g. 'a fooles cote, an hode to ye same with a dagger of wodde, & a furred coffe').²⁶⁴ Evidence is also provided that costumes were sometimes specially prepared for plays.

²⁶⁰ Jean Wilson, *The Archaeology of Shakespeare: The Material legacy of Shakespeare's Theatre* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1995), p. 136.

²⁶¹ Nelson, 'Hall Screens and Elizabethan Playhouses', p. 69.

²⁶² Alton, p. 76.

Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 211.

²⁶³ The value of such costumes is revealed indirectly: 'many were kept in chests in the master's living quarters, or locked in the tower along with the college plate. [...] Like the plate, the costumes were formally signed out and signed back in'. [Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 719.]

²⁶⁴ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 170.

Colleges did not always draw upon their own stocks of attire, however. Apparel might be borrowed from other sources as well, such as the Revels Office. In 1602-3, Christ's College, Oxford paid ten shillings 'to Henry Harbart', Master of the Revels, 'for vizarde and other furniture for a play'.²⁶⁵ Similarly, in 1594-5, Thomas Nevile (Master of Trinity College, Cambridge) wrote to Lord Burghley, the Chancellor, to request the use of royal clothes from the Tower, providing at the same time one explanation for the borrowing of costumes from such a source:

whereas we intend for the exercise of the yonge gentlemen, and scholers in *our* Collegde, to sett forth certaine Comoedies, and one Tragoedie, there being in that Tragoedie sondry personages of greatest estate to be represented in Auncient princely attire, *which* is no where to be had but *within* the office of the Roabes at the Tower: it is our humble request *your* most honorable *Lordship* would be pleased to graunte *your* Lordships warrant vnto the cheife officers there, that vpon sufficient securitie we might be furnished from thence, with such meete necessities as are required.²⁶⁶

Sometimes costumes were borrowed from individuals. The payment of twelve pence for 'carrying home the *Earl* of southamptons apparell' included in the records relating to the Trinity College (Cambridge) plays of 1612-3 suggests that the Earl had lent the scholars clothes for their productions of either (or both) *Adelphe* and *Scyros* that year.²⁶⁷

Props

Surviving inventories of playing gear and records of college expenditure on plays include numerous references to stage furniture. Many of the props are relatively simple (e.g. the 1548-9 inventory of playing items at St John's included 'iij scepters' and 'a croked sword gilted').²⁶⁸ However, references are made to the preparation and incorporation of more elaborate, sophisticated items of stage furniture as well. At Cambridge, 'Trinity College had "a payre of lytle gallowes" constructed for a show in 1554-5, and purchased "viiij ringes for ye Chariate" in 1560-1.²⁶⁹ In 1551-2 'a mechanical contraption called a heaven ("coelum")' was constructed in Queen's College hall, Cambridge. Some academic performances even

²⁶⁵ Alton, p. 81.

²⁶⁶ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 355.

²⁶⁷ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 500.

²⁶⁸ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 162.

²⁶⁹ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 719.

incorporated live props: 'At least twice, at King's College in 1552-3 and at Peterhouse in 1572-3, live hunting dogs were hired for use in a play'.²⁷⁰

Illusionistic scenery of a more modern kind was not introduced upon academic stages until the Jacobean period, and then was used rarely (e.g. Inigo Jones used perspective scenery for the 1605 performances at Christ Church, Oxford before King James). It appears to have been more usual to create 'settings' through the use of stage furniture and props. For example, at Trinity, Cambridge in 1612-13 a payment was made 'to the paynters for a pastorall clothe'. This was probably used as a background for the play(s).²⁷¹

Far more frequent, and familiar from the survey of school performances above, are references to the preparation of stage houses. The payment for the pastoral cloth in 1612-13 was accompanied by an expense upon 'the houses two nights'. Similarly, in 1551-2 Christ's College (Cambridge) paid 'ye carpenter for removing ye tables in ye haull and setting yem vp ageine with ye houses and other thinges', and in 1581-2 Corpus Christi paid 'Lamb and Porter for making houses at the Comaedie'.²⁷²

As in the grammar schools, the custom of using stage-houses for academic performances appears to have been prompted by the staging demands of the classical and neo-classical plays most regularly performed in the early Elizabethan period.²⁷³ Like those used at court and in schools such as Westminster, the stage-houses of the university stage are likely to have been timber / lathe structures covered by canvas.

Special effects and Music

The sound of real dogs was used in several productions to give the illusion of a hunt taking place off-stage (see above, p. 166). Similarly, measures were taken to mimic the sounds of battles. One of the stage directions included in Thomas Legge's *Richardus Tertius* (1579-80, St John's, Cambridge) provides an insight into the creation of such an illusion: 'lett gunnes goe of, and trumpettes sounde wth all sturre of souldiers wth out ye hall'.²⁷⁴ Customary techniques for simulating storms, similar to those employed upon the public stage, appear to

²⁷⁰ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 719.

²⁷¹ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 500.

²⁷² Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 500 and p. 173.
Moore Smith, p. 28.

²⁷³ Though initially associated with the staging of classical plays, stage 'houses' appear to have been employed in the performance of some contemporary plays as well, such as *Gammer Gurton's Needle*.

²⁷⁴ Cited in Boas, *University Drama*, p. 128.

have existed as well (e.g. in 1552-3 King's College, Cambridge paid 'Thorppe for makynge thunder agaynst the plays' and paid 'Burwell for a drye ffatte to make thunder on').²⁷⁵

Music played an important part in many of the dramatic entertainments organised in Oxford and Cambridge colleges, both within plays and as 'entr'acte' entertainment, and college archives include numerous payments relating to the provision of music at plays. In 1584-5 Christ Church, Oxford paid twenty shillings 'to ye musicians at my Lord of Leycesters beinge here for theire paynes at supper and at ye tragedie and when ye comedie was first played'. Similarly, in 1582-3 St John's, Oxford paid vijs 'to ye Musitians and links at wch tyme ye students had a comedie and Tragaedie'.²⁷⁶

While students seem 'to have sung the vocal parts' and may have occasionally provided their own musical accompaniment, it was apparently more usual to hire professional musicians, as the above entries indicate.²⁷⁷ Where no further specification is made it is likely that the musicians were local (e.g. town waits are known to have supplied college music).²⁷⁸ This was not always the case, however. In 1578-9, Christ's College (Cambridge) paid fifteen shillings to 'the Queenes trumpeters at the playes'.²⁷⁹

Performance Style

Contemporary accounts of academic performances are rare and generally do not discuss the performances of the actors in any detail. Hence our information about university acting styles is limited.²⁸⁰ Indirect evidence of at least one acting convention on the university stage appears to be found in *The Return to Parnassus II*. In this play the character of Will Kemp mocks the style of acting at the universities:

²⁷⁵ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 179.

²⁷⁶ Alton, p. 66, p. 77.

²⁷⁷ Trinity College, Cambridge had another option. The 'Elizabethan statutes of Trinity College require that body to maintain ten "Pueri Sympliciaci qui choristae nominentur", together with a music master.' [Salzman, II, p. 337.] It is possible that their musical skills were drawn upon for some of the college's performances.

²⁷⁸ In 1612-13 Trinity, Cambridge paid 26s. 8d. 'To Towne musicke.' [Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 498.]

²⁷⁹ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 281.

²⁸⁰ Whether the actors 'played chiefly to the large audience in front of the stage or to the smaller, more distinguished audience behind' is one of the many questions which remains unanswered. Alan Nelson offers an interesting suggestion: 'Perhaps pairs of actors [...] who engaged in dialogue tended to face one another, thus being visible to both audiences at once, in profile'. [Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 717.]

Burbage. Now *Will Kempe*, if we can intertaine these schollers
at a low rate, it will be well, they haue oftentimes a
good conceite in a part.

Kemp. Its true indeede, honest *Dick*, but the slaues are
somewhat proud, and besides, tis good sporte in part, to
see them neuer speak in their walke, but at the end of the
stage, iust as though in walking with a fellow we should
neuer speake but at a stile, a gate, or a ditch, where a man
can go no further.²⁸¹

[own emphasis]

Kemp suggests that university actors tended to deliver speeches from a stationary position (generally at the 'end of the stage'). This may be an exaggerated stereotype but if there were no truth in his characterisation of scholars' acting the scene would not be comic. By implication, university players used the acting space of the stage in a more formalized manner than their public stage peers.²⁸²

ii- University Play Productions

Organising plays for University Guests

When the universities expected a royal visit (or a visit from another dignitary) it was customary for them to plan a programme of entertainments for the guest(s).²⁸³ In the Elizabethan and Jacobean period the programme of entertainments for royal (and other important guests) usually included several play performances.

²⁸¹ *The Return From Parnassus*, II (IV. 3. 1753).

²⁸² Another interesting body of evidence is provided by the many payments relating to damages and repairs following performances in college accounts. In Cambridge, in 1563-4 sixpence was paid by Christ's College 'to barnes for paving in ye haule after ye plaies', 'vjs viijd' was paid by Jesus College 'to kinge ye plumber for mending ye clocke being thrise broke once at the playes and one other tyme', and in 1575-6 St John's paid 'a carpenter for mending the trestle and formes broken at the playes'). [Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 223, p. 254, p. 275.] Most frequent are payments for repairing broken windows (e.g. Trinity College, Cambridge paid 'for settinge in of lvj quarrelles of glass which wear broken at ye plaies' in 1565-6). [Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 248.] The frequency with which windows were broken prompted some colleges to remove the glass prior to performances. Hence, at St John's (Oxford) in 1616-7 'x li xs.' was paid 'for Taking downe ye Glass and setting it vp againe', and at Cambridge, Trinity paid seven shillings and six pence 'for taking downe and setting vp of the glasse at the playes in 1586-7. [Alton, p. 86 and Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 318.] If caused by the performances rather than the audience, these records of damage indicate that college plays could be boisterous affairs.

²⁸³ As Elliott reports: 'Preparations for [...] royal visits began with an official letter from the Chancellor to the vice-chancellor advising him of the nature of the occasion and requesting him to provide suitable entertainment'. [Elliott, 'Drama', p. 645.]

The way in which the theatrical part of the entertainment was organised appears to have varied during the Elizabethan and Jacobean era. A senior university figure might be elected to oversee preparations, as occurred when Queen Elizabeth was to make her first visit to Cambridge in 1564:

Roger Kelke, D.D., Master of Magdalene College, and Archdeacon of Stowe, was by the Vice-Chancellor and Heads of Colleges 'specyallye appoynted to set fourth and to teache suche ye Playes as should be exhibited before her Grace'.²⁸⁴

Assistants were often supplied as well (e.g. Kelke was to be 'joyned' with 'iiii or other thought meete for that charge, chosen out of the iiii or pryncipal Colledges').²⁸⁵ At Oxford, 'the university as a corporate body became the "producer" of the plays, in the sense that the vice-chancellor and his deputies, oversaw the choice of plays, their financing and furnishing, and their mode of production.'²⁸⁶ However, a special committee of university delegates was usually elected to manage and co-ordinate the practical arrangements for the play productions. In 1605, prior to the royal visit of King James and his family, the 'Delegates of Convocation' passed a series of orders relating to the plays to be prepared for the visit, and calling for the election of a body of delegates to supervise the preparations:

It is co[n]cluded three playes to be made in Lattin. viz. ij comedies & a tragedie. And christchurch hath vndertaken ye p[er]formance of one comedie & magdalen Collegde new Colledge & St Iohns haue vnd[er]taken ye p[er]formance of one other comedie & and tragedie havinge authoritie to make choyse of Actors & pen me[n] to helpe to pen[n] them, out of the whole vniv[er]sitie; and that the heades of the aforesaid three houses. vid[elicet] Magd[alen] Coll[ege] New Coll[ege] & St Iohns shall choyse delegates out of the aforesaid [...] three houses vnto them whoe shall ioyntly order all matters co[n]cerni[n]ge ye aforesaid playes.²⁸⁷

On other occasions, the universities sought the advice of professionals, hiring men from the world of London theatre to co-ordinate dramatic events. As noted above (p. 153), George Peele was paid twenty pounds for helping to prepare for the performances of William

²⁸⁴ Boas, *University Drama*, p. 91.

²⁸⁵ Boas, *University Drama*, p. 91.

²⁸⁶ Elliott, 'Drama', p. 645.

²⁸⁷ Elliott, *REED: Oxford University*, forthcoming.

Gager's *Rivales* and *Dido* before Albertus Alasco, Polish Prince Palatine at Christ Church, Oxford on '11 and 12 June', 1582-3.²⁸⁸

Financing university plays

Plays staged for university visitors were financed rather differently from college plays. At Cambridge, money would be raised either from the university as a whole or through levies on individual colleges (e.g. the university paid for the performances in 1563-4 and 1614-5, while assessments from individual colleges financed plays in 1612-13, 1614-15, 1628-9, 1631-32).²⁸⁹ On other occasions the financing of university productions was initially sustained by the host college or its members, reimbursements being made by the university at a later date. The university authorities were not always prompt in making such repayments, however, as is demonstrated by the financial wranglings which followed the performance of *Ignoramus* before King James by Clare Hall scholars in 1615. Robert Scott, Master of Clare College wrote to Owen Gwyn, the Vice-Chancellor about the matter:

Syr: the actors of Ignoramus haue beene longe suiters for a certeyne remainder of moneye, whiche theye clayme as due vnto them for expenses of their comedye, and that in my opinion verye iustlye, which you your selfe also (as I presume) will easiely acknowledge yt you wilbe pleased to consider, that theye weere no seekers of that employments, nor intruders vpon it, but entreat, or rayther vrged and pressed vnto it, by those that conuented them: with a promise that their charges shoulde be defrayed.²⁹⁰

At Oxford, university productions were usually funded in similar, but not identical, fashion. Each college and 'each student (with the exception of poor scholars)' was expected to 'bear an appropriate share of the financial burden' of entertaining royal guests.²⁹¹ The delegates responsible for supervising the entertainments for the guest(s),

²⁸⁸ Alton, p. 65.

E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, III, p. 458.

The decision to draw upon the services of professional theatre people finds an interesting parallel in the actions of some south-eastern towns when mounting local amateur plays. Occasionally, they, too, sought the assistance of London professionals, hiring men described as 'property players' or 'devysors'. [John C. Coldewey, 'That Enterprising Property Player: Semi-Professional Drama in Sixteenth Century England', *Theatre Notebook*, 31 (1977), 5-12 (p. 10).]

²⁸⁹ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 715.

²⁹⁰ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 550.

²⁹¹ Elliott, 'Drama', p. 645.

drew up a list of the valuations of each college's estates and levied a rate against them to pay the costs of the productions. They also levied a rate for each student depending on his status, the sons of earls bearing the heaviest burden, and so on down the social ladder. If this system proved insufficient to meet the actual costs, then it was applied again after the royal guests had departed, a procedure that had to be called into use after the expensive entertainment of Charles I in 1636 which ran to £843.²⁹²

The Place of Performances

At Oxford, play performances for visiting royals 'were all, with one exception, put on in Christ Church hall, both because Christ Church as a royal foundation traditionally acted as host to the sovereign, and because its hall was the largest in either Oxford or indeed Cambridge' (see plate 26).²⁹³ It was the usual location for performances for other university guests as well.

At Cambridge, university plays for visiting guests were performed in more than one college during the Elizabethan and Jacobean period. In 1564, plays were performed at King's College for Queen Elizabeth, whereas plays were performed at Trinity College for Prince Charles and the Elector Palatine in 1613, and for King James and the Prince in 1615.²⁹⁴ The preference for staging plays at Trinity in the Jacobean period may have been prompted by the fact that Trinity's hall was the largest college hall in Cambridge and one of the most sumptuously decorated, after its rebuilding and extension during the mastership of Thomas Nevile (1593-1615).²⁹⁵

Unlike most college productions, the university plays staged for Queen Elizabeth in 1564 were staged in King's College Chapel, rather than the College Hall. This had not been the original intention of the university organisers, however, as Matthew Stokys revealed in his account of the visit: 'There was, before her majesty's coming, made in the King's College hall, a great stage. But, because it was judged by divers to be too little, and too close for her highness and her company, and also far from her lodging, it was taken down'.²⁹⁶ A new stage

²⁹² Elliott, 'Drama', p. 645.

The contribution of Christ Church college was generally reduced in return for the use of the college for the royal visitors and the plays offered for the entertainment of guests.

²⁹³ Elliott, 'Drama', p. 644.

²⁹⁴ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 225, p. 509, p. 539.

²⁹⁵ The new hall was 'begun in 1604, slated in 1605, and glazed in 1607-8'.

Nelson, 'Hall Screens and Elizabethan Playhouses', p. 62.

²⁹⁶ Translated in Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, I, p. 226.

was then erected in the Chapel. The hall had been the first choice of the play organisers even in this instance. The chapel was only used after the hall at King's College had proved an incommodious venue. At Trinity College all of the recorded university play productions were staged in the hall, the more usual venue for student play performances.

Performers

While college plays were usually performed by members of the college within which the play was staged, university productions might be acted by students from another college or by a cast made up of students from several colleges. *Aulularia* and *Ajax Flagellifer* were performed 'for Elizabeth in August 1564 by students of colleges other than King's', and in 1615 *Ignoramus* was performed at Trinity College (Cambridge) for King James 'by students of Clare, Christ's, Gonville and Caius, Pembroke's, and Queen's'.²⁹⁷

As in college productions, the players were not usually paid for acting, although individual performers were sometimes presented with a monetary gift by the performance's guest of honour. The actor of Aemilia in *Palamon and Arcyte* (1566, Oxford) received 'eight Angels' from the Queen 'for gathering her flowers prettily in a garden then represented, and singing sweetly in the time of March'.²⁹⁸ Equally, actors 'of outstanding skill and presence might ultimately look for greater rewards. When Thomas Preston attracted the attention of Queen Elizabeth in August, 1564 as an actor in the play of *Dido*, his career was assured'.²⁹⁹

Audiences

The audiences for special performances for university guests could be large and might include a number of prestigious people (such as courtiers and high ranking members of the university), as well as the guest(s) of honour. When King James and Prince Charles visited Trinity College (Cambridge) in 1615, John Chamberlain claimed that 'aboue 2000 persons were conueniently placed' in the hall at the play performances. Another account of the visit describes the seating plan devised for the spectators and reveals, indirectly, that the audience for the plays contained doctors of the university, courtiers and other visitors:

the doctors in a place next ye stage the Regent and non Regentes in gowns in ye
bodye of ye Hall other strangers accordinge to their quallityes [vpp]on ye scaffoldes

²⁹⁷ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 721.

²⁹⁸ John R. Elliott Jr, 'Queen Elizabeth at Oxford: New Light on the Royal Plays of 1566', *English Literary Renaissance*, 18 (1988), 218-229 (p. 221).

²⁹⁹ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 721.

the vpper ende of ye Hall beyond ye stage was wholye reserved for ye Kinge and princes fellowes and ye Courtiers.³⁰⁰

Townspeople also appear to have attended some university play performances. Indirect testimony to this fact is found in the accounts describing an accident which occurred during the performance of *Palamon and Arcyte* at Christ Church in 1566. Such was the size of the crowd attempting to gain entry to the hall that a wall 'which protected the steps gave way, killing three persons'.³⁰¹ While one of the victims was a student ('a scholler of St Marry Hall, named Walker'), the other two were townsmen: 'a Brewer named Mr Pennie, and ye third, a cooke of C & C named Jo: Gilbert'.³⁰²

College members (especially junior scholars) were not necessarily invited to university performances. This was the case during the 1564 Cambridge visit of Elizabeth: 'No provision was made for the scholars of the University' at the plays 'as they had been ordered, after welcoming the Queen on her arrival, "quietly and orderlye to departe Home to their Colledges and in no wyse to come to the Gaite, the Disputacons, or to the Playes"'.³⁰³ Similarly, in 1615 a university order was passed in Cambridge prior to King James' visit, which stated that,

noe graduats of this Vniuersitie vnder the degree of Masters of Arts or fellow Commoners presume to come into ye streets neare Trinitye Colledge in ye tymes ye comodyes are Actinge, or after ye stage keepers be come forth, nor yat any Scholler, or student, but those only before excepted by any meanes presume, or attempte to come within ye said colledge, or hall to heare any of ye said Comodyes.³⁰⁴

Like the audiences for college productions, the audiences for university plays often included women as well as men. Evidence of women's attendance at plays staged during royal visits is particularly common. When King's College Chapel was prepared for the plays in 1564 special provision was made for the seating of Ladies (on the rood loft). On at least one occasion a university play was staged before a predominantly female audience. Samuel Daniel's, *The Queen's Arcadia* was performed at Christ Church, Oxford in 1605 before the

³⁰⁰ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 541.

³⁰¹ Boas, *University Drama*, p. 102.

³⁰² Boas, *University Drama*, p. 102.

³⁰³ Boas, *University Drama*, p. 192.

³⁰⁴ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 538.

Queen. When printed in 1606 it was announced as 'A Pastorall Trage-comedie presented to her Maiestie and her Ladies, by the Vniuersitie of Oxford'.³⁰⁵

The disruptive and rowdy audience behaviour sometimes recorded at college performances was not unknown at university productions either. In 1566 Richard Edwardes upbraided one spectator for foolishly interrupting the performance of his play *Palamon and Arcyte* before Queen Elizabeth at Christ Church College (Oxford). The incident is described by one of the actors in the production, Miles Windsor, and occurred during a scene in which the character Duke Perithous throws his cloak onto a 'funerall fier': 'Godes woundes, saythe a stander by, will ye burn ye *King Edward* cloake in ye fier? goo yi wayes, saythe Edwards, goo foole, he knowethe his parte kyndeste, what meane ye? (The cloak used in the 1566 performance appears to have been borrowed from the royal wardrobe, possibly once belonging to King Edward.)³⁰⁶

The Performances

The Time and Length of University Productions

University performances during the day and the night are recorded. Samuel Daniel's *The Queen's Arcadia* was performed before the Queen and her ladies in the morning at Christ Church, Oxford in 1605, for example, while the plays with which Queen Elizabeth was entertained at King's College Chapel during her 1564 Cambridge visit 'lasted from about nine p.m. to midnight'.³⁰⁷

Like other college plays, university performances could vary considerably in their length, some lasting only a few hours, others as much as eight hours. Reporting on the Trinity College performances mounted before Prince Charles and his guest, the Elector Palatine, in 1612-13, John Chamberlain spoke of them being 'two excellent comedies, but that they marred them with length and made them grow tedious, the one of them lasting between seuen and eight houres'. Similarly, in 1622-3, he described the Trinity performance of *Loiola* as having been contracted 'from sixe or seuen houres to foure or fiue'.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ Samuel Daniel, *The Queen's Arcadia* in *The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Samuel Daniel*, II, ed. by Alexander B. Grosart (London: Hazell, Watson and Giney, 1885), p. 208.

³⁰⁶ Elliott, 'Queen Elizabeth at Oxford', p. 223.

³⁰⁷ Moore Smith, *College Plays*, p. 35.

³⁰⁸ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 515 and p. 589.

Rehearsals

Rehearsals appear to have been a conventional preparation for university as well as college play performances. *Palamon and Arcyte* and Daniel's *The Queen's Arcadia* were rehearsed prior to their performances in 1566 and 1605, respectively. Edwardes' play was 'repeated before certain courtiers in the Lodgings of Mr. Roger Marbeck, one of the canons of Christ Church by the players in their Gowns', while Daniel's play was rehearsed 'in Canon Hawson's rooms'.³⁰⁹ In the case of plays intended for performance before royalty, rehearsals not only provided an opportunity to enhance the quality of the performance, but a chance for court representatives to screen the plays.³¹⁰

Stages

Plays performed for university guests in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period were, like other college plays, routinely performed upon wooden stages. Although the stage erected in King's College Chapel (Cambridge) in 1564 was placed 'in the Bodye of the Churche', the more usual location for the playing platform in university productions appears to have been the upper end of the hall.³¹¹ At Oxford, for example, the stage erected in Christ Church for the royal visit of 1605 was described as having been 'built close to the vpper end of the Hall'.³¹²

³⁰⁹ Elliott, 'Queen Elizabeth at Oxford', p. 221 and p. 222.

³¹⁰ References to the use of 'parts' or books are rare suggesting that performers usually memorised their roles. This made it possible for an actor such as John Dalaper to forget his words when performing in Edwardes' *Palamon and Arcyte* in 1564. (Exceptions include the three shillings spent on 'paper to write out ye bookes for ye tragedy' at St John's, Cambridge in 1578-9. This could indicate that 'either whole texts or individual part books were issued to players.' [Nelson in *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 722.] Alternatively, it could refer to the preparation of presentation copies for guests. Likewise, in 1620-1 'vs' was allowed by Trinity's Senior Bursar for 'Mr Coote for candles Inck and paper for the comedy'. Again, the writing may not have been for 'parts'.) [Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 284 and p. 576.]

³¹¹ Boas, p. 99.

³¹² Nelson, 'Hall Screens and Elizabethan Playhouses', p. 59 and p. 68.

It is possible that the plays mounted in Christ's Church, Oxford in 1566 before Elizabeth were also staged at the upper end of the hall as Nelson records: 'According to an eyewitness, the "theatrum" was located *parte illius superiori, qua occidentem, espicit*, which Wickham correctly translates "In the West end of the Hall". Wickham, however, draws a distinction between the "theatrum" which he interprets as meaning "auditorium", and the "scena", which he interprets as the stage platform and positions at the opposite or lower end of the hall. Judging from Cambridge use, however, while "theatrum" may include more than just the acting platform, it never means the scaffolds and galleries exclusive of the acting platform. The conclusion must be that the acting platform of Christ Church hall in 1566 was situated at the upper end of the hall'. [Nelson, 'Hall Screens and Elizabethan Playhouses', p. 68.]

Nelson also notes that the stage-configuration employed during the 1564 royal performances at King's College Chapel, Cambridge, can be interpreted as being in keeping with the convention of staging plays at the upper ends of halls: 'Most of the audience entered the antechapel by the normal side doors; the Queen entered from the choir through the rood screen. In sum, the antechapel was treated as a regular hall, lacking entrance screens; the rood-screen served as both wall and scaffold at the upper end of the 'hall'. [Nelson, 'Hall Screens and Elizabethan Playhouses', p. 68.]

However, whereas colleges were obliged to rely exclusively upon their own craftsmen when building stages for college productions, the universities could sometimes call upon the advice and assistance of the Royal Office of the Works as well, if they were preparing plays for a royal visitor. In 1605 Inigo Jones and Simon Basil, 'Comptroller of the Royal Office of the Works' designed the stage and theatre, respectively for the plays to be performed at Christ Church College, Oxford during the royal visit that year. 'Ffor the better contrivinge and finishinge of their stages, seates, and scaffoldes in Saint Maries and Christchurch', the university also 'intertayned two of his Majesties Master Carpenters from the Royal Works.'³¹³

The stages and scaffolds erected for the typically large-scale productions staged for the entertainment of royal visitors and other university guests could be large and complex. The stage and seating built in the chapel at King's College (Cambridge) included a special seat for the Queen and a path 'raised from ground level bit by bit [...] from the upper sanctuary of the chapel, whereby the queen might go up from the tumult of the onlookers onto this higher construction' to her throne, 'prepared for her in such a way that she herself might easily be seen by all the spectators'.³¹⁴

The stage designed by Inigo Jones for Christ Church College hall in Oxford in 1605 was even more elaborate and sophisticated. As Orrell records, 'Jones, responsible for the stage and scenery, resorted to Vitruvius for inspiration, providing a changeable set of updated classical *periaktoi* painted with perspective settings.'³¹⁵ In its incorporation of perspective settings the design was innovative. Such scenery had not been used before upon an academic stage in England. (Jones had only recently introduced such illusionistic scenery in the court masque with *The Masque of Blackness*, performed in 1604.)

Costumes, Props and Special Effects

Performances for university visitors were, like college plays, customarily staged in costume and employed stage furniture. Indeed, as large-scale productions intended to impress as well as to entertain university guests special provision was often made to employ good quality apparell and props. This might involve borrowing items from the Revels office in London (as sometimes occurred when college plays were organised). An indirect reference to the hiring

³¹³ Orrell, *The Human Stage*, p. 120.

³¹⁴ Translated from Latin in Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 1136.

³¹⁵ Orrell, *The Human Stage*, p. 120.

of costumes and props from the Revels Office may be included in a contemporary's account of the preparations made for the 1564 performance of *Ajax* (a play planned for the entertainment of Elizabeth in King's College, Cambridge in 1564, but which she did not see):

the supervisors of the plays had both decorated the entire stage for a tragedy and had the choicest actors made ready, and also had not been chary of either expense or late hours. For they brought down arms of war, clothes shining in splendour, and all the rest of the gear from London [and] other very remote places.³¹⁶

As the last comment indicates, playing attire was occasionally hired from other sources, including professional costumiers. In 1605 Edward Kirkham and Thomas Kendall supplied 'furniture' for the plays at Oxford during the royal visit. These men were both based in London and had an interesting connection with the world of London theatre:

Kirkham had been Yeoman of the Revels since 28 April 1586. But on 20 April 1602, he and Kendall, who was a London haberdasher, together with others, became partners with Henry Evans, the leasee of the Blackfriars Theatre, where the Children of the Chapel performed.³¹⁷

As Boas observes: 'It would therefore appear to have been from the stage-props of this company that the garments and "furniture" were hired for the use of the University'.³¹⁸

Costumes and props might be specially made for performances as well. In the costume lists for the plays staged for King James at Oxford in 1605 a number of items were identified as having been 'brought more by mr Kendall for the English Pastorall vppo mr Daniels lres [letters]' (i.e. for *The Queen's Arcadia*): 'four Sheppards coates of Taffata of severall coulors [...] seven Hatts of Taffata [...] seven Sheepe Hookes [...] three veluett nightcaps with borders of hayre [...] one yelow Taffata Robe'.³¹⁹ Similarly, in 1582-3 preparations for the plays to be presented before Prince Alasco at Christ Church included the payment of 'Richard west for felling 4. timber trees at Chandense for the heaven and other new building on the stage'.³²⁰

³¹⁶ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 1138.

³¹⁷ James I at Oxford in 1605', ed. by F. S. Boas, *The Malone Society: Collections*, III (Oxford: Oxford University, 1909), p. 241. *

³¹⁸ Boas, 'James I at Oxford', p. 241.

³¹⁹ Boas, 'James I at Oxford', pp. 25.

³²⁰ Alton, p. 64.

* Kirkham 'as Yeoman of the Revels regularly used Revels properties, especially for the boy companies to which he became linked in 1606! (Information kindly provided by Andrew Gurr.)

Perspective scenery was not usually used in university plays in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period. The 1605 performances at Christ Church, are an exception, as noted above (p. 176).³²¹

Like other college plays, university dramatic productions sometimes included special sound and visual effects as well. During the performance of *Palamon and Arcyte* in 1566 before Queen Elizabeth (Christ Church) live dogs were used in the staging of an illusory hunt, as Neale reported: 'At ye crie of ye houndes in ye Quadrant vppon ye trayne of a foxe in ye huntinge of Theseus, when ye boyes in ye wyndowes cried, nowe, nowe, o excellent saide ye Queene those boyes are readie to leape out at windowes to followe the houndes'.³²² Another example of the ingenious staging employed in some university plays is provided by the performance of Gager's *Dido* before Prince Alasco (Christ Church, Oxford in 1583). One of the play's stage directions in Act III calls for 'Tempestas'. That the storm was represented is revealed in Holinshed's account of the performance. He describes how 'it hailed small confects, rained rosewater, and sned an artificiall kind of snow'.³²³

Music

Music was also included in many university play productions. Richard Edwardes' *Palamon and Arcyte* (performed in two parts before the Queen at Christ Church, Oxford in 1566) was 'a play with music'. William Gager's *Dido*, staged before Alasco in 1583 at Christ Church (Oxford), likewise, included music.³²⁴ At Cambridge in 1612-3 the Trinity College authorities in Cambridge not only paid for 'Towne musicke', but for the services of '5 musitians from London', for the plays staged before Prince Charles and the Elector Palatine.³²⁵

University plays may have occasionally finished with a musically-accompanied jig as well, as was apparently customary at playhouses like the Globe in the early seventeenth century.³²⁶

These 'heavens' may not have been identical with those permanent structures included in later public playhouses, but it is interesting that such a stage feature appears to have been used in academic as well professional performances.

³²¹ The text of one of the plays performed (Matthew Gwinne's, *Vertumnus*) suggests 'that there must have been five such periaktoi, as that play requires a central rural scene flanked by four "houses" for the four seasons, which remain in position throughout the play'. [Elliott, 'Drama', p. 651.]

³²² Cited in Boas, *University Drama*, p. 103.

³²³ Cited in Boas, *University Drama*, p. 187.

³²⁴ John Caldwell, 'Music in the Faculty of Arts', in *The History of the University of Oxford, III: The Collegiate University*, ed. by James McConica (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), 21-212 (p. 209).

³²⁵ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 500.

³²⁶ Thomas Platter visited the Globe in October 1599 and watched a performance of *Julius Caesar*: 'I and my company went over the water [i. e. over the Thames] and saw in the house with the thatched roof [...] the tragedy of the first Emperor Julius Caesar quite aptly performed. At the end of the play according to their custom they danced quite exceedingly finely, two got up in men's

One account of King James' visit to Christ Church, Oxford in 1605 alludes to the King being led out of the college hall 'to a chamber hung with painted cloths the play being done gigg and all'.³²⁷

The Reception of University Plays

Accounts of royal performances are more plentiful than accounts of other college performances, but few are detailed or discuss the staging of the performances. Those reports which survive reveal that the plays performed for royal visitors and other dignitaries enjoyed mixed success, like other college play performances.

Plays like *Palamon and Arcyte* (1564) and *Ignoramus* (1615) were well received. Even in rehearsal, *Palamon and Arcyte* was popular. The account of its rehearsal in Marbeck's lodgings concludes that it 'was so well lyked that they saide it far surpassed *Damon and Pythias*', and when performed the Queen was reputed to be very pleased: 'when the Play was ended she called for Mr. Edwards, the Author, and gave him very great thanks, with praises of reward, for his pains'.³²⁸ Likewise, *Ignoramus* was such a success when performed before James in 1615 that it 'was repeated at the request of the king'.³²⁹

However, the success of such performances does not mean that the quality of all the acting was perceived to be high. In one of the contemporary accounts of *Palamon and Arcyte*'s performance cited above, the author suggests that the Queen was critical of one actor's performance. Speaking of Trecatio's actor she was supposed to have said: 'God's pittie what a knave it is'. An earlier version of the performance account includes a more detailed report of John Dalaper's poor performance as Trevatio:

and by dalaper Trevatio beinge out of his parte and missing his hewe and offeringe his service to ye ladyes, swearing, by ye masse and Gotes blutt I am owte Godes pittie and lyke, to mr secretarye, and whistlinge vpp a home pype in verye good measor. Goo thy way, Godes pity, saythe ye Quene, What a knave it tis, and lykewyse Mr. secretarye, goo yi wayes, thowe are clir owte, thowe mayste be

clothing and two in women's [dancing] wonderfully together. ' [Translated in *Shakespeare's Globe Rebuilt*, ed. by J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996), pp. 190-1.]

³²⁷ Elliott, *REED: Oxford University*, forthcoming.

³²⁸ Boas, *University Drama*, p. 101.

Elliott, 'Queen Elizabeth at Oxford', p. 220.

³²⁹ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 861.

lowde to playe ye knave in any grownde in england.³³⁰

Other university plays were not favourably received. One of the spectators of *Ajax Flagellifer* at Christ's College, Oxford in 1605 was unimpressed: 'The same daye after supper about 9 of the clock they began to act The Tragedye of Ajax flagellifer, wherein their stage varied 3. times, they had all goodlie anticke apparrell, but for all that yt was not acted soe well by many degrees as I have seene yt in Cambridge'.³³¹

Similarly, the entertainments provided at Trinity for the royal visit to Cambridge in 1614-15 were described acerbically by John Chamberlain:

the first nights entertainment was a comedie made and acted by St. John's men, the cheife part consisted of a counterfait sir edward Ratcliffe, a foolish Doctor of phisicke, which proued but a leane argument, and though yt were larded with pretty shews at the beginning and ending, and with somewhat too brode speach for such a presence, yet yt was still drie.³³²

While he praised the second night's performance of *Ignoramus*, he still considered it too protracted, being 'more then halfe marred with extreme length'. However, he was most dismissive of the play provided on the third night, *Albumazar*: 'there was no great matter in yt more then one goode clownes part'.³³³ As this demonstrates, the prestige of the academic forum and the scholarly auspices of college performances did not preserve them from critical judgement.

iii

Case Study

Although descriptions of contemporary performances are rare and often brief, it is possible to offer hypothetical reconstructions of some college performances, drawing upon the evidence of surviving university plays and playing places, and the information supplied by college accounts. In the following section, the performance of *Club Law* at Clare Hall in 1599-1600 is reconstructed.

³³⁰ Elliott, 'Queen Elizabeth at Oxford', p. 224.

³³¹ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 553.

³³² Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 540.

³³³ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 540.

The performance of *Club Law* at Clare Hall, c1599-1600

Club Law (possibly written by George Ruggle) was allegedly performed at Clare Hall, Cambridge c. 1599-1600. Report of the performance is preserved in Fuller's history of the university:

The young *Schollars* conceiving themselves somewhat wronged by the *Townsmen* (the particulars whereof I know not) betook them for revenge to their *wits*, as the weapon wherein lay their best advantage. These having gotten a discovery of some *Town privacies*, from *Miles Goldsborrough* (one of their own Corporation) composed a merry (but abusive) *Comedy* (which they call'd CLUB LAW) in *English*, as calculated for the capacities of such, whom they intended *spectatours* thereof. *Clare-Hall* was the place wherein it was acted, and the Major, with his Brethren, and their wives, were invited to behold it, or rather themselves abused therein. A convenient place was assigned to the *Towns-folk* (rivetted in with *Schollars* on all sides) where they might see and be seen. Here they did behold themselves in their own best cloathes (which the *Schollars* had borrowed) so lively personated, their *habits, gestures, language, liege-jests, and expressions*, that it was hard to decide which was the *true Townsman*, whether he that *sat by*, or he who *acted on the stage*. *Sit still* they could not for *chafing*, *go out* they could not for *crowding*, but impatiently patient were fain to attend till dismissed at the end of the *Comedy*.³³⁴

Fuller's account of the comedy's performance is among the most detailed descriptions of a college play production in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period, offering an intriguing insight not only into the cultural context and occasion of the alleged performance, but into some aspects of its staging. However, whether the play was actually staged before the townsmen it satirised in this way is not certain. There is no record of the play's performance in the college records of Clare Hall and no reference to the incident in the university and town records. This does not mean that the performance described did not occur. Miles Goldsborough, the townsman alluded to in the account, was a real person, being named among the 'four and twenty' townsmen chosen for the council on 4 December, 1599 (*Club Law*, p. xl).³³⁵ Likewise, there is evidence that the play satirised contemporary townspeople

³³⁴ The extract from Thomas Fuller's, *History of the University of Cambridge* (1655) (Wing: F2416) is cited in Moore Smith, *Club Law*, pp. xxxix- xl. Hereafter all references to the play will be cited in the text.

³³⁵ He was described as a baker. He also appears to have held the office of Bailiff of the Tollbooth, evidence given before the vice-chancellor in the case of William Nicholson on 14th October, 1592 including an allusion to 'Mr Miles Gouldesboroughe, Bailiff of the Tollbooth.' [*Club Law*, p. xl.]

and 'owed its origin to a long-standing feud between the university and the town of Cambridge, which at the close of the sixteenth century had become especially acute' (*Club Law*, p. xii).³³⁶ There are, for instance, a number of parallels between John Yaxley (Mayor of Cambridge, 1599-1600) and the play's mayor, Niphle, as Moore Smith has shown in his edition of the play. Yaxley, like Niphle, was a lawyer and probably came from a baker's family.³³⁷ Yaxley was also reputedly hostile to the university, like his counterpart, Niphle. In Act I, scene 6, Niphle voices his intention of asserting the town's authority over the scholars of the university:

as for theise gentle Athenians, I will rout out the
whole generacion of them, and make the vagabonds
seek their dwellings, they shall not nestle with us in
our streets, nor out brave us in our owne dunghills,
they shall trudg, they shall trudge, if Nicholas Niphle
be head of this Citie, they shall packe with bag and
baggage.

(*Club Law*, I. 6. 520)

In 1601, Chief Justice Popham writing to the town's new mayor, Mr Chase commented upon Mr Yaxley's antagonistic treatment of the university and its ill-consequences for relations between the town and the university: 'Mr Yaxley [...] is suspected to haue bene a meane to nourish unkindenes betwene the Towne & the Vniuersitie which for my owne parte I would be glad to be at vnitie that the publique service be not, by the crosse humours of some, neglected' (*Club Law*, p. xxvii).

³³⁶ There were a series of clashes between the university and town authorities in the Elizabethan period over the question of respective authority and responsibility for various aspects of local government. For example, in 1589-90 'letters were received by the Mayors of towns from the Privy Council concerning the killing of flesh in Lent, and the Mayor of Cambridge took upon him to take bond for the due observing of the order from certain butchers and victuallers. As the university claimed that any such proceeding was entirely in its own province, it sent a protest to Lord Burghley.' [*Club Law*, p. xvii.] In 1596 the townsmen 'drew up articles of complaint against the University', and complained to Lord Chief Justice Popham 'of high-handed and irregular proceedings on the part of the University.' [*Club Law*, p. xviii, p. xxi.] Notably in the play, Spruce suggests in similar fashion that the Athenian townsmen 'putt up a / supplicacion together with the informacions of the injurie' the scholars 'have offered us, and so to crave constraint of their / liberties.' [*Club Law*, II. 2. 707, p. 27.]

³³⁷ 'Of Niphle, we are told "his father was Baker, he brought him up pretelie to his booke, hee is a pretie petifogging Lawyer, a kind of Attorney, hel'e drawe blood of theise gentle Athenians (l. 462) [...]" John Yaxley, [...] was a lawyer and very probably the son of a baker. At any rate there was a baker of the same name in Cambridge at this time.' [Moore Smith in *Club Law*, pp. xli-lii.]

Drawing upon a similar combination of dramatic and historical evidence, Moore Smith suggests that 'Brecknocke', 'Tavie' and 'Colby' also represented contemporary townsmen, Robert Wallis, Hugh Jones and William Nicholson, respectively. [His evidence for these conclusions is cited in the note.]³³⁸ As Moore Smith notes: 'If these identifications be accepted, it is natural to suppose that Club Law was acted soon after Yaxley had become Mayor', c. 1599-1600 (*Club Law*, p. xlviii).

There is also evidence that university members had used play performances to ridicule townsmen in this period in a complaint made by the town authorities in 1601:

The scholars of the University, being in taverns, alehouses and diverse publick places, do grievously and very disorderly misvse in generall all free burgesses, and in particular the magistrates of the town. And also in the Plays in colleges and publick sermons, whereby great occasion of grudge is offered.

(*Club Law*, p. xlviii.)

For the purposes of the following discussion, Fuller's account of *Club Law*'s performance at Clare Hall is, therefore, accepted. Drawing upon this description and the evidence of the surviving parts of the play, it is possible to reconstruct several aspects of the Clare Hall performance, as will be demonstrated.

The Performance

The Place

Fuller's account describes the performance as occurring in Clare-Hall. He does not identify the location of the production more specifically. However, as in other colleges, it is likely

³³⁸ In the play Brecknocke is identified as having been a 'Burgomaster two years, [...] that unlike Niphle he lives by his merchandise alone (l. 2456), is a chandler (l. 146), that though Niphle now finds him backward in resisting the foes of the town, he has been forward in times past (l. 2453).' [*Club Law*, p. xliii.] As Moore Smith notes: 'The only man in these years who had been Mayor of Cambridge twice was Robert Wallis, who had been elected in 1596 and 1597, and had been a determined opponent of university privileges.' [*Club Law*, pp. xliii-liv.]

Tavie is identified in the play as keeping a house of dubious reputation and at the end of the play seeks a job in the university (*Club Law*, p. xlv). Hugh Jones had been a university servant and found himself in trouble for keeping a disorderly house in 1597. In this year it was alleged that 'Joanes did lodge or suffered to be lodged in his house certaine schollers and suffered them to playe at tables cardes and dyce in his howse.' [*Club Law*, p. xlv.] Finally, William Nicholson, like Colby, had been in trouble 'for ingrossing corn', being fined in 1596 and imprisoned in the castle as a punishment. [*Club Law*, p. xlvii.]

that the performance was staged in the college hall. The dining hall which existed in the Elizabethan period was in place by 1524. It had 'an oriel towards the Court' and 'beyond the screens were the butteries'.³³⁹ This hall does not survive. As Willis and Clark reported in 1886: 'The Old Hall, Butteries, and Combinations Room stood clear in the area of the present Quadrangle until the present Hall and its appurtenances were finished in 1693, when they were cleared away until the buildings of the new Court were completed at the beginning of the eighteenth century'.³⁴⁰ A description of the old Hall is provided by Richard Steele in *The Spectator* (May 30, 1711):

This is to assure you that the club of Ugly Faces was instituted originally at Cambridge, in the merry reign of King Charles the second. As in great bodies of men it is not difficult to find members enough for such a club, so (I remember) it was then feared, upon their intention of dining together, that the hall belonging to Clare-Hall (the ugliest then in the town, though now the neatest) would not be large enough handsomely to hold the company.³⁴¹

Whether or not the Hall was the 'ugliest' in the seventeenth century, as Steele asserts, his comment upon its limited audience capacity reveals that the chamber was one of the smaller college dining halls. This might be one of the reasons that the performance was apparently crowded. (Fuller describes how the townspeople could not flee the performance for 'crowding'.) (*Club Law*, p. xxxxi.)

The Performers

Although not stated by Fuller, it is likely that the play's performers were all Clare Hall men, college productions usually being performed by members of the host college. The play calls for a large cast (including over fifty characters). While it would have been customary to use doubling, it is likely that at least twenty or more students from the college were involved in the production. The performers may have included some of the college's youngest members. Certainly, internal descriptions suggest that characters such as Cricket would have been played by someone small and boyish. In Act III, scene 6, for example, Musonius refers to Cricket as 'boy' and Cricket mentions that he is smaller than some of the other students:

³³⁹ *The Architectural History of the University of Cambridge*, ed. by Robert Willis and John Willis Clark, 4 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1886; repr. 1988), I, p. 84.

³⁴⁰ Willis and Willis Clark, I, p. 84.

³⁴¹ Cited in Willis and Clark, I, p. 84.

Muson. Why / they will say wee are all boyes, if they should see you
come you must be gone.

Crick. I must begone, and heer is a greate stocke,
that hath no more metall in him then your whelpe,
and hee must goe, because he is a little bigger then I,
and I must be gone.

Muson. How this boy prates.

(*Club Law*, III. 6. 1383)

The Audience

Fuller describes how 'the Major, with his Brethren, and their wives' were invited to the performance and seated amongst the scholars (*Club Law*, pp. xxxix-xi).³⁴² This not only reveals that the audience included a mix of townspeople and academics, but included women as well as men.³⁴³ Assuming that the connections Moore Smith identifies between several of the play's characters and contemporary Cambridge townsmen are correct, it is possible to offer a more specific identification of some of the town spectators. The Mayor alluded to would have been John Yaxley. Likewise, it is possible that the other townsmen in the audience included Robert Wallis, Hugh Jones and William Nicholson, the men also allegedly satirised in the play. If the performance occurred after the 4th December, 1599 and the college invited all of the Mayor's brethren (and the Aldermen), another audience member could have been 'Miles Goldsborow', the townsman accused of providing the scholars with information about the civic authorities. He had been elected to the 'four-and-twenty' on the 4th December (*Club Law*, p. xxvii.).³⁴⁴

³⁴² The scholars may have been drawn from other colleges as well as Clare's. Likewise, there may have been uninvited townspeople in the audience.

³⁴³ The references to the audience in the play only mention 'gentlemen'. In his closing speech Cricket addresses the 'deere Gentlemen' of the audience, for example (*Club Law*, V. 5. 2846). This could mean that the play was not performed before the townspeople, or that it was not originally prepared with such a performance in mind. Equally, the author may have been deliberately ignoring those members of the audience satirised in the play.

³⁴⁴ The other men elected and possibly invited to the performance were John Tiddeswell, Thomas Manninge, Thomas Emons, John Holmes, William Andrewes, Martyn Wharton, John Goodwyn, Richard Bembridge, John Hawkins, John Fidlinge, John Haselopp, Richard Jones, Thomas Tomson, Thomas Smart, Peter Whalley, John Andrewes, Hugh Rose, Godfrey Twelves, William Archer, John Dawson, John Wickstedd, John Durant, Thomas Frenche.' [*Club Law*, p. xxvii.] The aldermen who helped Yaxley elect these men and who might also have been invited to the performance were John Edmonds, William Wulfe, Thomas Metcalfe, John Narkot, James Robson, Jeremy Chace, John Jenkinson and Edward Potter. William Nicholson and Robert Wallis were also aldermen and involved in the elections. [*Club Law*, pp. xxvi-vii.]

Evidently, the audience was relatively large if there was 'crowding', while, Fuller's reference to the spectators as those 'sat-by' suggests that most members of the audience were seated, as was usual at college plays (*Club Law*, p. xxxxi). As in other colleges the spectators probably sat upon forms.

Staging the Play

As the performers are described as acting 'on the stage', a stage platform was presumably prepared and used. Like the stages used for other college productions it was probably a wooden platform and was possibly painted. As the Hall was not especially large, any platform would need to have been of relatively compact dimensions. It would probably have been set up at the upper end of the hall, where the oriel window could have afforded natural lighting if the performance was staged in the day.³⁴⁵

At least one stage house may have been built for the stage as well, representing the doorway of Mr Burgomaster's house in Act III, scene 2, in front of which Cricket ties his rope and from the door of which Puff, Catch and Niphle emerge: 'As they came out of the dore he tripps up there heeles with a rope, and beates them with the Clubb,' reads the stage direction (*Club Law*, p. 40). The house could have been set at the side or rear of the stage, allowing actors to enter and exit through it. The same house might have functioned as Tavie's house in Act II, scene 4 and Act III, scene 5, although it is possible that a second house was set up.³⁴⁶

Costumes

Although the town depicted in the play is named as Athens the fact that the author is representing contemporary Cambridge is only thinly disguised. In keeping with this setting, it is likely that most of the characters wore contemporary dress. According to Fuller, those scholars playing the parts of the leading townsmen even acquired clothing belonging to the individuals whom they were parodying, adding a special authenticity to their impersonations. How such items were obtained is more puzzling. The scholars may have asked to borrow the clothes or may have obtained them without the owners' knowledge. Certainly, it is not the only occasion upon which scholars appear to have acquired a person's real clothes for use in an impersonation. When *Ignoramus* was performed in the Jacobean period, the gown of

³⁴⁵ The time of the performance is not recorded in Fuller's account and therefore could have been in the day or the evening, although an evening performance is perhaps more likely.

³⁴⁶ In this case, the house may have been at the side of the stage and open on one side to allow the audience to see the characters inside.

'Bracken', the town recorder satirised in the play, was allegedly borrowed for the performance.³⁴⁷

The other costumes required for the play (e.g. the gowns for the female characters) could have been borrowed or made for the occasion. The play does not include any detailed information about the characters' costumes, although it is likely that the students playing the townsmen at the council gathering in Act IV, scene 1 wore some kind of civic dress (e.g. scarlet gowns); and in Act V, scene 4 the townsmen are wearing hats which some of them remove in preparation for meeting the students (*Club Law*, V. 4. 2657). Similarly, it is likely that the scholars (e.g. Philenius and Musonius) wore scholars' gowns.

Props and Special effects

The play calls for a variety of small props, most of which would have been simply obtained or borrowed for the occasion, including apples (I. 4. 77.), cushions (I. 6.), a table (I. 6.), paper and pen (II. 2. 771.), rope (III. 1. 1040), clubs (III. 2.), filled sacks (III. 4), a dagger (III. 6. 1370.), a bill (IV. 2). The only larger prop explicitly required by the action is the tub in which Niphle and the wench hide (III. 7. and III. 8.) and in which the pair are carried off-stage. A large wooden tub could probably have been made or borrowed, however (e.g. from the college buttery). The play does not call for items of scenery, although it is possible that one or two stage houses were set up on the stage (as noted above, p. 186) to represent the doorway to Mr. Burgomaster's house in Act III, scene 2 and Tavie's house (e.g. in Act III, scene 7).

The play requires few special effects either. The stage directions do not call for any special visual or sound illusions. The only aspect of the performance which would have required some use of staging illusion would have been the violence included in the play's action (e.g. Cricket throws apples at the townsmen in Act I, scene 4; in Act III, scene 2 Cricket trips up and clubs the townsmen; and in Act IV, scene 6 part of the fight between the students and townsmen occurs on-stage). These moments would have required careful choreography if the students were to avoid causing each other any injury. Wine and vinegar may have been used to give the illusion of wounds, as occurred on the public stages.

³⁴⁷ John Holles the younger reported to Lord Norris that in *Ignoramus* the students 'monstrously abusd Bracken yeir recorder in his gowne [...] borrowed for ye purpose.'
[Cited in Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, II, p. 1241.]

The Style of Performance

Fuller's description of the performances of the scholars taking the townsmen's parts suggests that considerable thought was put into the way in which they performed their roles: 'Here they (the *Townsmen*) did behold themselves in their own best Cloathes (which the Schollars had borrowed) so lively personated, their *habits, gestures, language, liege-jests*, and *expressions* that it was hard to decide, which was the *true Townsman*' (*Club Law*, pp. xxxix-xi). While the accuracy of the impersonations may be exaggerated, Fuller's report remains intriguing, suggesting that the scholars attempted to imitate not only the appearance of the parodied citizens but their gestures, their accents, and their manner of speaking.

The impersonations were also apparently sufficiently accurate to be quickly recognised by the townspeople in the audience, so that they could not '*sit still [...] for chafing*' (although the content of the play and the costumes used may have alerted them first to the fact that they were to be personally 'abused' in the play') (*Club Law*, pp. xxxix-xi). Whether the performances of the other actors were similarly skilful is unrecorded. However, if the whole play was carefully rehearsed all the performers are likely to have been fluent and, at least, competent in their roles.

Audience Reaction

Club-Law was calculated to please contemporary scholar-spectators, with its satirical treatment of known townsmen and their wives, and its celebration of scholars. In Act V, scene 4, for instance, Musonius instructs the townsmen to 'learne to measure students [...] / according to their own / excellency, and know that learning and the Arts are / divine, they fetch their pedigree from the high heavens' (*Club Law*, V. 4. 2753).

As performed at Clare Hall, the play was even more likely to amuse and please the scholar audience, the spectacle of the humiliated and ireful townspeople in the audience forming another part of the entertainment and adding a further piquancy to the play's satire of townspeople. The discomfit of the citizens was apparently scripted in to the occasion, the students arranging for the townspeople to be 'rivetted in' by scholars so that they could 'be seen' as they chafed at being made the on-stage butt of the students' humour. In effect, they, like the on-stage student actors, had a 'part' to play in the performance.

That the response of the students in the audience was positive is implied but not overtly stated by Fuller, whereas the predictable dissatisfaction and anger of the humiliated citizens

is described: '*Sit still* they could not for *chafing*, *go out* they could not for *crowding*, but impatiently patient were fain to attend till dismissed at the end of the *Comedy*' (*Club Law*, pp. xl). However, although the citizens may have been prevented from demonstrating their distaste for the production during its performance, their criticism of the play did not go entirely unexpressed, according to Fuller. In a further entry he reports that the Mayor and his brethren complained,

of this *libellous Play* to the *Lords* of the *Privie Councell*, and truly aggravate the *scollars offence*, as if the *Majors Mace* could not be played with, but that the *scepter* itself is touched therein. Now though such *gravity* of the *Lords*, as they must *maintain Magistracy*, and not behold it *abused*: yet such their *goodness*, they would not with too much severity punish *Wit*, though *waggishly employed*, and therefore only sent some *slight* and *private check* to the *principall Actors* therein.
(*Club Law*, pp. xl-xli.)

However, as he also records:

There goeth a tradition, many earnestly engaging for the truth thereof, that the Townsmen not content herewith, importunately pressed, That some more severe and publick punishment might be inflicted upon them. Hereupon, the Lords promised in short time to come to Cambridge, and (because the life in such things is lacking when onely read) they themselves would see the same Comedy, with all the props thereof, acted over again, (the Townsmen as formerly, being enjoined to be present thereat) that so they might the better proportion the punishment to the fault, if any applied. But rather than the Townsmen would be witnesses again to their own abusing [...] they fairly fell off from any farther prosecution of the matter.³⁴⁸

No evidence of the Townsmen's complaint to the Privy Council survives, neither does any reference to the Council's suggestion that they would visit Cambridge to see another performance of the play. This does not mean that the anecdote is untrue. Certainly, it was not unusual for the corporation to complain to the Privy Council and to petition them to intervene on their behalf against the university, as revealed above. Similarly, it was usual for the Privy Council to attempt to defuse antagonisms between the two bodies by assuming a moderate

³⁴⁸ Nelson, *REED: Cambridge*, I, p. 378.

line when settling disputes between them. It may be true therefore that the play's very success as a satire prevented its enjoying any repeat performances at early modern Cambridge.

Some General Conclusions

Academic play performances in regional schools and colleges are recorded throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean period, reflecting the vitality of academic drama in the early modern era in England. School and college performances by professional troupes were a more rare occurrence, the latter especially so as a consequence of the regulations in both university towns preventing professional performances within five miles of their precincts, but they were not unknown. In studying performances in schools and colleges we thus have a fascinating opportunity to consider one of the arenas shared by professional and amateur theatre in the provinces of early modern England.

CHAPTER FOUR

Dramatic Performances in Early Modern Country Houses

When companies went on tour (or when local amateurs mounted parochial productions) they did not only perform in public venues. Performances were also staged in private town and country houses.¹ At Fivehead in Shropshire, for example, a number of men, including 'Willelmum Iellet', and 'Willelm umffex' were presented 'ffor acting a stage play in the howse of Nicholas Bryne in ffiffehead on sonday 6 mai j instantis att evening prayer time, and drawing a great multitude of people togeathers', in 1610; and the itinerant Yorkshire company led by Robert and Christopher Simpson in the early seventeenth century appears to have specialised in private-house performances.²

In general, however, there is little information about performances in town houses or small country houses. If such house owners kept household accounts they have rarely survived. We are more fortunate when we turn to consider another variety of 'private house' frequented by playing companies: the large country house.³ Although the records of many early modern country houses have been lost, and those which survive do not necessarily record every performance by playing companies, there is more extant and detailed information about players' visits and performances in these private, provincial venues.⁴ Consequently, this chapter will focus upon country house performances. [See appendix vi for a list of large country houses explicitly recorded as playing venues between 1559-1625.] However, the conventions of performance in these large provincial households is unlikely to have differed

¹ Such private performances would generally be sponsored by a single patron, usually the owner of the house. Although a large audience might be assembled they would not usually pay to see the play. It should be noted that it was not unknown even for a civic-sponsored performance to be staged in an individual's house (e.g. the 1568-9 Ludlow performance by the 'scollers of lemster' was given at 'my lady townsendes', which appears to have been a private house). [REED: *Shropshire*, ed. by Alan B. Somerset, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1994), I, p. 83]. Other private house performances can be difficult to identify. For instance, it is not always easy to distinguish private house performances from inn performances, as it was common to refer to pubs as 'houses'. For example, when the 'Lord Shandoze' Men were licensed to play at 'Marmaduke gills howse till sonday next' in York (1601), the named venue appears to have been a private house but could have been an inn. [REED: *York*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Margeret Rogerson, 2 vols (London: Manchester University; Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1979), I, p. 496].

² Somerset, REED: *Shropshire*, I, p. 120.

A number of people were presented alongside the Simpsons at the Helmesley Quarter Sessions in 1615-16 for 'receiving the players in their dwelling houses'. [G. W. Boddy, 'Players of Interludes in North Yorkshire in the early seventeenth century', *North Yorkshire Record Office Publications*, 7: 3 (1976), p. 110.]

³ Country houses were large, non-urban dwellings, often set in parklands and, traditionally, the country residences of the wealthy and socially elite (e.g. noblemen and women, and successful professionals and business people).

⁴ Performances by players are only likely to be recorded in surviving household documents if the company were paid for their performance, or if the troupe was provided with meals or some other form of entertainment or assistance.

substantially from those observed when troupes staged plays privately in smaller provincial houses.

Placing Country House Performances in Context

In order to contextualise play performances in country houses properly some understanding of the physical make-up of the houses and of their place in contemporary culture is necessary. Thanks to the work of scholars such as Mark Girouard a considerable amount of information about early modern England's country houses and their importance as status symbols is readily available. Indeed, by drawing upon general texts such as Girouard's, *Robert Smythson and the Elizabethan Country House*, and *Life in the English Country House*, and more specialised studies such as Alice Friedman's, *House and Household in Elizabethan England: Wollaton Hall and the Willoughby Family*, a detailed picture of early modern country houses and their place in contemporary English culture is afforded. [The reader is referred to these works for a fuller account of country houses in their social and cultural context.]⁵ As a preliminary to a more detailed consideration of dramatic activity and its place in early modern country houses a brief survey of these provincial buildings is offered, drawing upon the findings of Girouard in particular.

In the early modern period the number of country houses proliferated as house-building became increasingly popular at all levels of society. For example, in Yorkshire between 1559-1642, 'at least 280 manor houses were either built from the ground or substantially improved.'⁶ It was not a fashion confined to the traditional wealthy classes (e.g. nobles), gentry families and successful men of business and trade were also buying and building country houses. Indeed, increasingly vast sums of money were lavished upon building projects by a variety of individuals, to create houses of ever greater grandeur and size. The most spectacular were the so-called 'prodigy houses', which sought to be innovative as well as grand in design. Examples include Theobalds and Audley End, the latter apparently

⁵ Mark Girouard, *Robert Smythson and the Elizabethan Country House* (London: Country Life, 1983). This text was first printed as *Robert Smythson and the Architecture of the Elizabethan Era* (London: Country Life, 1967).

Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (London: Penguin, 1980).

Alice T. Friedman, *House and Household in Elizabethan England: Wollaton Hall and the Willoughby Family* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1989).

⁶ J. T. Cliffe, *The Yorkshire Gentry From the Reformation to the Civil War* (London: Athlone, 1969), pp. 102-3.

Similarly, Stone reports that, 'a survey of four widely spread counties- Derbyshire, Essex, Shropshire, and Somerset- suggests that the amount of country house building in the fifty years between 1570 and 1620 far exceeded that of any subsequent half century.' [Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641*, abridged edn (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University, 1967) p. 251.]

costing up to eighty thousand pounds. William Harrison drew attention to the increasingly fine quality of many country houses in his *Description of England* (1587): 'such (houses) as be latelie builded are commonlie either of bricke or hard stone, or both; their roomes large and comelie. [...] Those of the nobilitie are likewise wrought with bricke and hard stone, as provision may best be made; but so magnificent and statelie as the basest house of a baron dooth often match in our daies' with those 'of princes in old time'.⁷

As Sharpe observes, 'the ability to consume conspicuously was thought to be one of the distinct attributes of a great man or woman'.⁸ Erecting a grand house was therefore a means of manifesting one's wealth and gentility. In some cases, patrons were seeking to impress a very specific audience such as the monarch. Writing of the great Elizabethan 'prodigy' houses, Stone notes that:

Their sole justification was to demonstrate status, their sole function to entertain the sovereign on one of the summer progresses. Referring to his own Theobalds and to Sir Christopher Hatton's Holdenby, Lord Burghley spoke of 'her for which we both meant to exceed our purses', while Hatton described Holdenby as a 'shrine' which 'that holy saint may sit in...to whom it is dedicated'.⁹

Likewise, as Girouard notes, traditionally, 'they were power houses- the houses of a ruling class. [...] As a result, from the Middle Ages until the nineteenth century anyone who had

⁷ Cited in Molly Harrison and O. M. Royston, eds, *How They Lived: An Anthology of Original Accounts written between 1485 and 1700* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), II, p. 37.

Investing large amounts of capital in the erection of grand country houses was, in some ways, a calculated risk. This is particularly true of those people building great homes in the hope of attracting a royal visit and, thereby, royal favour. It was not a risk which paid off in all cases. When Robert Cecil, the Earl of Salisbury, built Hatfield 'in the early years of the seventeenth century, its plan was carefully devised in anticipation that he would be frequently entertaining James I and his Queen. He died in 1612, aged 48, when he was only just finishing.' And James I never visited the house 'during Salisbury's lifetime'. [Girouard, *Life*, p. 112.]

⁸ J. A. Sharpe, *Early Modern England: A Social History, 1550-1760* (London: Edward Arnold, 1987; repr. 1991), p.167.

⁹ Stone, p. 252.

Stone describes how Elizabeth's popularising of the progress played a role in prompting new provincial building: 'Medieval monarchs had been peripatetic, moving restlessly from palace to palace, from hunting lodge to hunting lodge. By the sixteenth century administrative necessities had long since bound the King to reside for most of the year in the vicinity of London. But their flair for publicity inspired the Tudors, and especially Elizabeth, to tour the country in summer [...] waited on by an army of royal servants [...]. It was to accommodate and entertain this nomadic horde that the great courtiers of Elizabeth and James vied with each other in building the giant prodigy houses'. [Stone, pp. 208-9.]

SOME DIAGRAMS
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made money by any means, and was ambitious for himself and his family automatically invested in a country estate'.¹⁰

The Buildings

Elizabethan and Jacobean country houses varied in size and lavishness of decoration, but certain widespread characteristics externally and internally can be identified: for instance, up to the turn of the sixteenth century it was particularly fashionable to build large houses (of two or more floors) around courtyards. From the turn of the century, house building on a compact, rectangular or square plan, without courtyards, became more popular. (Hardwick's New Hall is a fine example of this new style of house.) Similarly, many early modern manor houses are distinguished from their medieval predecessors by their exterior symmetry and their incorporation of classical decoration.¹¹

Internally, most early modern country residences not only housed a series of chambers (for daily use and sleeping accommodation) and kitchen facilities, but were fitted with a large hall. By the turn of the century, many houses also included a gallery and great chamber. A number of spaces were therefore potentially available as playing spaces and there is evidence of halls and great chambers being used for performances.¹² A more detailed account of these spaces can therefore provide some insight into the ways in which such chambers lent themselves to use as temporary theatres.

¹⁰ Girouard, *Life*, p. 2.

¹¹ For example, in the 1570s Sir John Thynne had the rebuilt house at Longleat reclad with a neo-classical facade. This involved 'building pilastered windows of three stages, Doric, Ionic and Corinthian, at regular intervals round the outside of the house; linking them to each other by continuing their entablatures across the intervening spaces'.

[Girouard, *Robert Smythson and the Architecture of the Elizabethan Era*, p. 58.]

¹² As one of the other large spaces to be found in early modern country houses, it is also possible that galleries were occasionally used as playing spaces, although no records of such performances survive.

When Sir William Petre had Ingatestone Hall built in the 1550s he was one of the first nobles to request the inclusion of a long gallery (measuring 94 x 18 feet) in his country house. Many later country house builders also commissioned galleries, some of even grander proportions (e.g. Audley End's gallery measured 226 feet and that at Hatfield 163 feet). [F. G. Emmison, *Tudor Secretary: Sir William Petre at Court and Home* (London: Longman, 1961), p. 32.] Galleries 'originated in covered walks' and were initially designed to be places of exercise. As a result, they often contained little furniture. During the later sixteenth century, however, they became 'status symbols', growing 'longer, wider and higher'; 'although remaining almost unfurnished, they often approached the magnificence of a great chamber in their decoration'. [Girouard, *Life*, p. 102.] Likewise, they became places of more general recreation, functioning as 'supplements or alternatives to the great chamber' (e.g. Girouard speaks of their use for games, music and masques). [Girouard, *Life*, p. 102.]

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The Medieval hall (from which those of the early modern period derived stylistically) was generally the heart of the household, literally and metaphorically. Often in a central location (parallel with the length of the house), halls served a number of roles in the life of the household. Traditionally, they had functioned as a communal dining room, and were used, 'for receiving guests and saying goodbye to them, and for all kinds of entertainment. Christmas junketings all took place, or had their main centre, there.'¹³

By the sixteenth century the importance of the hall and its role in household life had changed. It was rarely used for dining, for example.¹⁴ Similarly, it became less usual to receive guests in the hall, great chambers often being favoured as the setting for such receptions. However, halls were still used as places of entertainment on some occasions, particularly those organised on a large-scale, such as seasonal feasts and festivities. Likewise, they continued to be important spaces for the display of a patron's wealth and status, as Timothy Mowl notes when challenging the argument that halls declined in importance: 'If, as some authorities claim, these halls had begun to sink in status [...] it is difficult to explain why the most splendid internal features of such houses continued to be their hall screens, topped with ornate overhanging galleries and pierced by either one or two impressive archways'.¹⁵

Physically, the halls of early modern country houses were much like the refectories of medieval noble houses and monasteries, or the dining halls still found in Oxford and Cambridge colleges. Usually, they were large, rectangular spaces, varying in size.¹⁶ Some country houses, particularly those of the great Elizabethan and Jacobean courtiers, were built with halls paralleling the great halls of the royal palaces in proportion (e.g. the hall at Kenilworth measured 90 x 45 feet, dimensions comparable with those of the halls at Windsor and Hampton Court, measuring, respectively, 108 x 37 feet and 108 x 42 feet). Other houses contained halls of more modest dimensions. Penshurst's hall measures 62 feet x 39 feet; the hall at Sir William Petre's house at Ingatestone measured 'about 40 feet long and 20 feet

¹³ Girouard, *Life*, pp. 32-3.

¹⁴ By the fourteenth century the Lord and his family tended to sup instead in private parlours, and by the end of the Tudor period, it was even rare for servants to dine in hall. This was a change lamented at an early stage by William Langland in *Piers Plowman*: 'Wretched is the hall...each day in the week/ There the Lord and Lady liketh not to sit/ Now have the rich a rule to eat by themselves/ In a privy parlour...for men's sake,/ Or in a chamber with a chimney, and leave the chief hall/ That was made for meals, for men to eat in'. [Cited in James Chambers, *The English Houses* (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 39.]

¹⁵ Timothy Mowl, *Elizabethan and Jacobean Style* (London: Phaidon, 1993), p. 146.

¹⁶ Thompson argues that the monastic frater originally 'provided the pattern for the service arrangements at the lower end of the hall - for, indeed, the distinction between upper and lower ends of the hall'. [Michael Thompson, *The Medieval Hall: The Basis of Secular Domestic Life, 600-1600 A.D.* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1995), p. 194.]

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wide'; and the halls at Gawthorpe Hall and Smithills Hall (the Lancashire houses of the Shuttleworths) are 30 feet x 20 feet, 4 1/2 in. and c. 30 feet x c. 34 feet, respectively.¹⁷

At the upper end there would often be a dais, lit by an oriel window, while, at the lower end, service doors typically led to the kitchen and buttery.¹⁸ By the sixteenth century it was common for the lower end of the hall to be fitted with a screen (usually wooden) before the service doors as well. This screen might be ornately carved and was sometimes topped by a minstrels' gallery. (For example, the great hall at Gawthorpe, Lancashire- a house visited by numerous playing companies in the seventeenth century- is fitted with a simple wooden screen and a minstrels' gallery. The stone screen at Wollaton Hall is also topped by a gallery and carved with elaborate Flemish derived classical designs).¹⁹

The phrase 'great chamber' originally only specified 'a large chamber, and was used as a distinguishing description in houses that had several chambers'.²⁰ By the end of the sixteenth century it came to refer to the room that was 'the ceremonial pivot of the house', 'the place of state, where the lord keepeth his presence'.²¹ Consequently, it was common for them to be richly decorated (as at Hardwick New Hall where the room is decorated with a magnificent plaster frieze depicting Diana in the woods) [see plate 34]. They could also be large, indeed, comparable with halls in their dimensions. This is the case at Hardwick New Hall where the High Great Chamber 'is approximately 66 feet long [...] [and] the basic width of the chamber is 32 1/4 feet (although there is 'a deep alcove in the long outside wall created by a bay window')'.²² This may be one of the reasons for their use as performance spaces. Like halls, great chambers served many uses, as Girouard records, including 'the lying-in-state of

¹⁷ Girouard, *Life*, p. 33.

Emmison, p. 29.

David George, 'Jacobean Actors and the Great Hall at Gawthorpe, Lancashire', *Theatre Notebook*, 37 (1983), 109-121 (p. 116).

The information about the approximate dimensions of the Great hall at Smithills Hall was kindly provided by Angela Thomas, Senior Keeper of Human History at Bolton Museum, in a private communication (14 May, 1998).

Notably, these halls are comparable in their dimensions with the various sized indoor playhouses of London (e.g. the auditorium of the Second Blackfriars playhouse is believed to have measured 66 feet by 46 feet, and the Cockpit playhouse only measured 35 x 14 feet). [Keith Sturges, *Jacobean Private Theatre* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987) pp. 38-9.]

¹⁸ When used for dining, the High table for the Lord and Lady and the most privileged guests would be located upon the dais. The remainder of the guests would sit at tables in the main body of the hall, arranged parallel with its length.

¹⁹ George, 'Jacobean Actors', p. 116.

²⁰ Girouard, *Life*, p. 40.

²¹ Girouard, *Life*, p. 88.

²² Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and Their Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993), pp. 81-2.

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corpses' before funerals, 'playing cards, dice and backgammon in between meals', 'family prayers, especially in houses that had no chapel', and for entertainments such as 'music, dance, and the putting on of plays and masques'.²³

Country Houses and their Households

In order to appreciate fully the place of drama in the life and culture of the early modern houses which hosted play performances a fuller understanding of the make-up and conventional organisation of the household is, likewise, necessary.²⁴ Country houses not only accommodated their owners and their families. They were usually home to a body of servants as well. Collectively these constituted the 'household', and, as Stone observes, 'it was a community in which all members, and particularly the head and his wife, lived in a perpetual crowd'.²⁵ Usually, we are talking about a mainly male community, female servants being few in medieval and early modern manor households.²⁶

²³ Girouard, *Life*, p. 88.

²⁴ Country houses were not entirely autonomous communities, influencing and being influenced by individuals beyond as well as within their walls. Country house owners and their neighbours were often linked socially and financially: for example, estate owners might be their neighbours' landlord or lady. Consequently, while the landlord/lady benefited from the dues received from tenants (e.g. s/he might use them to finance his/her own household), the tenants might look to their landlord/lady to protect their social interests and welfare. Indeed, traditionally, noble lords were expected to assume a paternal and protective role in relationship to their tenants, while, in return, the tenants extended their loyalty to the Lord. This mutual dependence could make for friendly and intimate relations between the lord/lady's household and neighbouring families. Equally, it could lead to tense relations between country houses and their neighbouring communities (e.g. rent rises or changes in the system of levies occasionally led to friction). The Cholmleys of Yorkshire were involved in protracted legal wrangling with their Ingleton tenants. [Cliffe, p. 111.]

²⁵ Stone, *Crisis*, p. 269.

The size of households varied. While the number of 'family' members was often similar, the number of servants retained by country house owners could differ substantially. Typically, the 'family' was confined to the owner's close relations. As Stone observes: 'one or two relatives sometimes formed part of the household, as companions of the lord or lady or as administrative officers but this seems to have been as much the result of personal choice from a wide field of acquaintances as of a sense of family obligation. More commonly relatives were employed as stewards and land agents living independently on the scattered family estates. Certainly no relative, not even a brother or sister could claim membership of the household as a right'. [Stone, *Crisis*, p. 269.] Some households were maintained by a small core of servants (e.g. in 1600 Sir Thomas Hoby of Hackness appears to have employed only fourteen domestic servants). [Cliffe, p. 385.] Other country house owners drew upon the services of many people (e.g. the Stanley household 'exclusive of the family, varied from 115 to 140 people [...] in the 1580s'). [Girouard, *Life*, p. 82.]

There were restrictions upon the number of retainers allowed to be kept by any private individual. You were supposed to seek a licence from the Queen if you wished to retain a sizable body of men; and Elizabeth never issued licences for more than a hundred retainers. These rules may have been bent occasionally. Certainly, there are records of nobles having more than a hundred retainers.

Those serving in larger country households were of diverse social rank and origin, and the roles they performed varied accordingly, as Girouard notes: 'Yeomen servants and grooms' were likely to come from a Lord or Lady's own tenantry. 'Gentlemen servants could be the elder sons of local landowners, waiting for their fathers to die, or younger sons, who had entered the households as a career. [...] In a very grand household the senior officials were usually considerable local

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Players visiting a country house could probably expect to have dealings with senior as well as general household staff. They might be welcomed to a country house by its steward (the most important officer in many households, and responsible for 'enforcing household policy') or a bailiff (as the Simpson players were when they visited Sir John Yorke's house at Gowthwaite in 1609-10).²⁷ Meanwhile, their payment for playing might be presented to them by a household's treasurer or 'comptroller'. Another official with whom visiting entertainers might have had to liaise, if they were to perform in the hall of a country house, was the 'marshall of the hall', or hall 'usher'.²⁸ Where such an officer existed, he was in charge of maintaining discipline and order in hall; and, therefore, would probably be in charge of the accommodation and management of whatever audience was collected for a play performance in the hall. He might also have been the figure to whom players would apply for help with the preparation of a stage.

Entertainment in Country Houses

Country houses were not only built to provide accommodation or to be status symbols. They were also designed 'for pleasure'. They were places of, and for, entertainment. Those families living in a country house for most (or even part) of the year would often have many leisure hours to fill. 'Ennui' was one of the hazards of country house life for their owners and families, as numerous contemporary accounts testify:

Lord Pembroke, down at Wilton in 1601, wrote 'I have not yet been a day in the country, and I am as weary of it, as if I had been a prisoner there seven years'.

Edmund Verney at Claydon a little later was 'weary of this deep dirty country life'.

landowners and notables in their own right; they worked part-time only for their lord, and carried out much of their work through deputies.' [Girouard, *Life*, p. 16.] That men of higher social rank generally occupied the more important household roles is demonstrated by the make-up of the late sixteenth century Stanley household. The fourth Earl of Derby's household steward was himself a powerful man, Sir Richard Shireburn, 'lord of the manor of Stonyhurst, near Clitheroe'. [REED: *Lancashire*, ed. by David George (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1991), p. xxxiv.]

²⁶ Girouard, *Life*, p. 27.

²⁷ Kate Mertes, *The English Noble Household, 1250-1600: Good Governance and Politic Rule* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988) p. 22.

²⁸ Such a post did not exist in all Elizabethan and Jacobean households. However, a set of orders from the Willoughby Household (1572), specifying the duties of household officers, provides an insight into the possible role of an usher (or marshal) of the hall. Its prescriptions include the following: 'All disorders in the hall are by the usher to be reformed, and if there be any stubborn persons, he is to expell them out of the hall'. [Cited in Friedman, p. 186.]

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Lord Clifford, at Skipton Castle, had 'banished myself from all my friends and recreations'.²⁹

If such boredom was to be alleviated or avoided recreations and/or entertainment was necessary. Country house entertainments took many forms, from card-playing and banquets, to musical exhibitions and play productions. To lavish money upon entertainment was also a form of 'conspicuous consumption' and thus another means of impressing others with one's wealth and status. Equally, as an act of hospitality, inviting guests to share recreation and refreshments in one's house was a way of demonstrating one's gentility, for great men and women were expected to be generous and hospitable. As Heal records: 'the association between housekeeping and true nobility was kept alive in the conduct literature and in popular imagery. The common gentleman exercised liberality, the more ostentatious nobleman displayed magnificence, but both ideally kept open house so far as their money allowed'.³⁰ Country houses provided an ideal arena in which to exercise such qualities.

Large-scale entertainments (or grand acts of hospitality) were often organised to coincide with traditional holiday times or special occasions, such as a wedding, as noted above (p. 21). During the Christmas season 1595-6, for example, Sir John Harington organised a series of festivities, lasting several weeks, at his country seat in Rutland, Burley-on-the-hill.³¹ In a letter to Anthony Bacon, Jaques Petit, the resident French schoolmaster, recorded the 'excellent and magnificent order that was observed in this house with all suitable merry-making this Christmas':

To entertain and cater for eight or nine hundred neighbours, who every day came to feast here, the following order was observed. Twice a day there was a sermon at the church, in the morning and afternoon, and every day there was a new clergyman.

²⁹ Girouard, *Life*, pp. 5-6.

³⁰ Felicity Heal, 'The Idea of Hospitality in Early Modern England' *Past and Present*, 102 (1984), 66-93 (p. 70).

It is interesting to find growing complaints in the seventeenth century about the decline of hospitality of this sort. They coincide with the tendency of families to spend less time in their country houses; a phenomenon which also prompted complaints and a royal proclamation. In 1614 King James complained of the 'great resort of gentlemen of quality and livelyhood...into the city of London, and other principall citties and townes of this realme, with a purpose (as it appeareth) to settle their habitation there'. Amongst the 'harmful consequences' he feared as a result of this trend was a 'decay of hospitality in the country'. Consequently, proclamations were issued 'commanding such persons to return to their country estates'. [Cliffe, p. 231.]

³¹ The 'twelve days of license, which lasted from Nativity to Epiphany' were initiated by the Lord of Misrule; but Sir John had already been entertaining 'up to two hundred persons'. [Gustav Ungerer, 'Shakespeare in Rutland' *Rutland Record*, 7 (1987), 242-248 (p. 244).]

The Earl and Countess were present most of the time. The Earl was waited upon with all possible honour and respect. There was music at lunch and dinner; thirty or forty gentlemen were in attendance when they brought dishes; two or three knights and their ladies were seated at his table besides a great many other gentlemen and gentlewomen. Then after the meals there was dancing and pleasant games for fun and amusement. Sir John used to dine in the hall where he received his neighbours and most important farmers, regaling them with excessive good cheer of all sorts of dishes and wines. His steward saw to it that the others lacked for nothing, having four or five long tables decked with food-stuffs for eighty or a hundred persons at a time. When these had finished they made room for as many further persons and left. When everything was over, the poor were given bread and food in abundance so much that when all were satisfied, there was still much food left.³²

The Petres organised a similar round of festivities involving the local community during the Christmas holidays of 1551-2. On Christmas day 'many Ingatestone folk were invited to dinner'; on a later day, people from the 'villages of Puttsbury and Margetting were entertained'; and 'on New Year's day [...] a second lot of Ingatestone people were among the guests, and there sat down to dinner "six mess of the town and of them that brought presents", and there were four "mess" for supper'.³³

The entertainments provided within country houses were not necessarily confined to family or household members (although on some occasions this may have been the case, as when 'my Lo: Wharton his players' were paid for performing 'one play before my Lo: and the Ladies at Heslewood' in 1614-5).³⁴ Guests of high and low status might also be present. The play performed at Lathom House during the New Year period (29 Dec-4 Jan) 1588-9 was given before the Earl of Derby's household council and 'Sir Iohn Savadge'. These constituted a select and prestigious audience for, as David George notes 'Derby's chief household officers' included 'many of the leading gentry of Lancashire' (e.g. Sir Richard Shireburn, Sir Peter Legh, Alexander Rigby, Edward Halsall, Sir Thomas Tyldesley, and Edward Scarisbrick).³⁵

³² Translated by Ungerer, 'Shakespeare in Rutland', p. 244.

³³ Emmison, p. 123.

³⁴ Lawrence Stone, ed., 'Companies of Players entertained by the Earl of Cumberland and Lord Clifford, 1601-39', *Malone Society: Collections*, V (Oxford: Oxford University, 1960) p. 22.

³⁵ George, *REED: Lancashire*, pp. 180-1 and p. 354.

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A more mixed audience appears to have shared in the entertainment offered at Wollaton by Lord Derby's players in 1599-1600. The payment to the company refers to 'many cuntre pepell' who 'came to dener' as well. By implication, the country folk were invited to see the play as well as to have dinner.³⁶ Similarly, reflecting on life before the Civil War, Sir Richard Cholmley recalled entertaining 'strangers who came to dinner', and described how 'whatever their fare was they were sure of a hearty welcome'.³⁷

Plays in County Houses: The Evidence

Our main source of evidence for play performances in country houses are the payments to players recorded in surviving household accounts (e.g. the 1606-7 accounts of the Earl of Cumberland include a payment to 'my Lo. Stafforthes players' for a performance at Skipton Castle).³⁸ The references which occur in such accounts are generally brief and limited in the information which they supply. Often the only details recorded are the name of the company and the amount of money they were paid (e.g. in the Shuttleworth's 1588-9 accounts at Smithills payments of five shillings and 'ijs.' respectively were recorded as having been made to 'plaers of prestone' and 'pleares of nante wyche'; no further information was preserved).³⁹

The titles of the plays performed are not usually recorded in such accounts, although there are exceptions. In 1618 Sir Richard Cholmeley of Brandsby rewarded 'Phil. Lord Wharton's men' for 'one play, the dumb Knight.'⁴⁰ Some accountants do provide more details about the acting companies and their visits, recording the size of the company and, occasionally, the venue for the performances. In 1611, for instance, the Earl of Cumberland's accounts include

³⁶ *Great British Historical Manuscripts Commission: Middleton 69*, ed. by W. H. Stevenson, p. 463.

³⁷ Cited in Sharpe, p. 171.

³⁸ Stone, 'Companies of Players', p. 21.

³⁹ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 167.

⁴⁰ 'The Memorandum Book of Richard Cholmeley of Brandsby, 1602-1623', *North Yorkshire County Record Office Publications*, 44 (1988), p. 150.

'The dumbe Knight. A historicall Comedy, acted sundry times by the children of his Maiesties Revels' was printed in London in 1608. [Alfred Harbage, *Annals of English Drama, 975-1700*, 2nd edn, revised by S. Schoenbaum, 3rd edn, revised by Sylvia Stoler Wagonheim (London: Methuen, 1964; repr. New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 94-5.] The authors were Lewis Machin and Gervase Markham. The play's late performance by Lord Wharton's Men suggests that the troupe were using the printed play text as the basis of their production, providing evidence that professional as well as amateur playing companies occasionally made use of printed texts as prompt-copies.

The Caroline accounts of Skipton Castle also include allusions to named play performances. In 1635-6 a payment was made to 'a certeyne company of Roguish players whoe represented A new way to pay old debts' and to 'Adam Gerdler whome my lord sent for frome Yorke to act a part in the knight of the burning pestell.'
[Stone, 'Companies of Players', p. 26.]

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a payment of 'iii li' to 'xiiij Players my Lo: of Darbies men, whoe Plaied two Plaies heere at Lonsbrough: the one after dinn and the other after supp the vth of Iune'. The same company in 1612 were paid by the Earl for having stayed 'twoe dayes and twoe nightes and plaied fower playes'.⁴¹ Meanwhile, the Stanleys' 1588-9 household records include a reference to a play being given 'at nyghte [...] in the halle'.⁴² Occasionally, additional information about the size of companies and the length of their visits is found in household pantry accounts. The Clifford pantry accounts regularly record meals provided for players (and sometimes the number of players fed) at Londesborough and Skipton Castle. When Lord Wharton's Men visited Londesborough, for example, in 1599-1600 the troupe is recorded as consisting of eight players. They were provided with supper on 28th January and dinner and supper on 29th January; and were rewarded with thirteen shillings and four pence on 30th January. By implication, they visited the house for two nights (three days), arriving on the 28th in time for supper and leaving on 30th January, after receiving their reward.⁴³

Other sources of information can sometimes provide supplementary evidence of, and for, private house performances. Ecclesiastic and secular court records include occasional references to performances in private homes, including country houses. In these cases, the records usually exist because the production proved in some way controversial. For example, we learn that a company of itinerant actors performed in Roxby Hall, the house of Sir Richard Cholmley's father, in 1609 from a Star Chamber complaint of Sir Thomas Hoby against Cholmley: 'the sayd Staige players Cominge into his sayd fathers howse at Roxby [...] Sir Richard Cholmley [...] in despite of the sayd Sir Thomas his warrante did not only suffer but also did giue leave and lycence vnto the sayd players to play diuers stage playes.'⁴⁴ Similarly, the performance of an interlude at Golden (Cornwall), the house of the Tregian family, became known as the result of a case made against Francis Tregian, accusing him of harbouring recusant Priest, Cuthbert Maine (c. 1575). Tregian's trial and the interlude performance (by an actor called Twigges) are alluded to in a *Treatise on the Trial of Francis*

⁴¹ Stone, 'Companies of Players', p. 21.

⁴² George, *REED: Lancashire*, pp. 180-1.

⁴³ John M. Wasson and Barbara D. Palmer, 'Professional Players in Northern England, Parts I and II', a paper given at the Annual Meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America, in Washington D. C. in 1997, 1-22 (p. 8).

In some cases, an allusion to a company in the Clifford Pantry accounts is the only evidence of a troupe's visit: for example, in 1595 an unnamed company of eleven players was provided with supper. There is no record of any reward (or performance). They may have been 'travelling through' or performing once in return for their board and accommodation for the night. [Wasson and Palmer, p. 8.]

⁴⁴ London, Public Record Office, Star Chamber 8 12 / 11, mb. 2. Hereafter all references to this manuscript will be cited in the text.

Tregian: 'Twigges [...] sayed further that hee comminge vnto Golden with an Enterclude at Christe masse in the yeare of our Lord 1575 was then lodged with the sayd *Cuthbert* Maine, at which tyme Maine told him that he was a preiste'.⁴⁵

Contemporary letters and accounts include passing references to country house play performances as well. In his letter to Sir Anthony Bacon about the 1595-6 Christmas festivities at Burley-on-the-hill, Jacques Petit included a brief account of a performance of *Titus Andronicus* by a London company (possibly on New Year's Day): 'On a fait icy vne mascarade de linuention de Sir Edward Wingfield on a aussi ioue la tragedie de Titus Andronicus mais la monstre a plus valeu a le suiect'.⁴⁶

Antiquarian family histories and memoirs can be another valuable source of information: for example, the only evidence that plays might have been staged in the home of Sir William Holles of Houghton is to be found in the *Memorials of the Holles Family* 'compiled by his great-grandson Gervase in the late 1650s'. The allusion is brief but intriguing, and revealing in its association of the private performances with holiday occasions: 'It will not be amisse to remember (because even in those times unusuall amongst the greatest subjectes) that he alwaies kept a company of stage players of his owne wch presented him masques and playes at festivall times and upon dayes of solemnity'.⁴⁷

Indirect sources of evidence can also shed light upon country house performances and their staging: for example, knowledge of companies' touring routes and dramatic patrons can help us to identify country houses visited in the period.⁴⁸ Dramatic evidence can be similarly

⁴⁵ Tregian denied the charges of priest harbouring but admitted that there had been an interlude performed. From other information given it would appear that Twigges, described by Tregian as 'a poore parish Clarke,' had been manipulated into giving false evidence in an attempt to compromise Tregian and secure his conviction as a recusant. [*REED: Dorset/ Cornwall*, ed. by Rosalind Conklin Hays and C. E. McGee, Sally L. Joyce and Evelyn Newlyn (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1999), p. 532.]

⁴⁶ Gustav Ungerer, 'An Unrecorded Elizabethan Performance of *Titus Andronicus*', *Shakespeare Survey*, 14 (1961), 102-109 (p. 102).

⁴⁷ Bernard Capp, 'A Lost Elizabethan Actors' Company', *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 44:1 (1997), 95-6 (p. 95). The performances staged for Sir William Holles' entertainment might have taken place at Houghton Hall, the Nottinghamshire residence of the family in the sixteenth century. The Hall does not survive to the present. 'Yet it was one of the greatest in the county before the Holles family, by intermarrying with the Cavendishes, moved over to Welbeck Abbey and pulled it down in the C18.' [*The Buildings of England: Nottinghamshire*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner, revised by Elizabeth Williamson (London: Penguin, 1951; repr. 1979), p. 139.]

⁴⁸ A patron of a dramatic company was likely to be visited by his / her company at some point, for example, even if such a visit does not survive in records.

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revealing. There are a number of extant printed plays which appear to have been written for country-house performance which contain internal allusions to their auspices.⁴⁹

It is also possible that those country-house owners (and household members) active as playwrights staged productions of their plays in their houses, or in the houses with which they were affiliated. Amateur playwrights owning or residing in provincial country houses in the period include Sir William Percy (author of plays such as *Cuckolds and Cuckqueans*), the 6th Earl of Derby (no plays written by the Earl survive but his activity as a playwright is testified to by contemporary, George Fenner), Fulke Greville (e.g. *Antony and Cleopatra*, 1601), John Newdigate III (e.g. *Glausamond and Fidelia*), Sir Edward Dering (adapted Shakespeare's two *Henry IV* plays to produce a single drama, 1623), Lady Mary Sidney (e.g. *Antonie*, published 1592), Elizabeth Cary, Viscountess Falkland (*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 1602-4), and Lady Mary Wroth (*Love's Victory*, c.1620).⁵⁰ Surviving manuscripts written by such authors could contain evidence of private performances. Indeed, although often thought of as 'closet' dramas, written only to be read, some of the extant manuscripts produced by such authors *do* include material which implies their preparation for performance (even if these productions were not realised).

The stage directions which accompany Wroth's *Love's Victory* 'suggest that she thought of the work in terms of an actual performance'.⁵¹ The directions are detailed: for example, Act IV, sc. 7 calls for, 'the Temple, the dead bodies on the altar. enter the SHEPHEARD and SHEPHEARDESSES, casting flowers on them; VENUS, [who] appears in glory'.⁵² The manuscript plays apparently written by John Newdigate III contain similar indications that

⁴⁹ One such play is Nashe's *Summer's Last Will and Testament* [1592], which appears to include allusions to its performance at the Archbishop's Palace in Croyden. [Thomas Nashe, *Summer's Last Will and Testament* in *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. by Ronald B. McKerrow, revised by F. P. Wilson, 5 vols (London: Bullen [vols 1-4], Sidgwick & Jackson [vol 5], 1904-1910; repr. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), III.]

⁵⁰ Cited in *Annals of English Drama, 975-1700*, ed. by Alfred Harbage and revised by S. Schoenbaum (London: Methuen, 1964), pp. 80-1, pp. 116-7. The manuscript of *Glausamond and Fidelia* to which I refer is held at Warwick County Record Office, CR 136 B766. The works of Sidney, Cary and Wroth are cited in *Renaissance Drama by Women: Texts and Documents*, ed. by S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 17, p. 45, p. 92.

The Earl of Derby could have made use of any of his Lancashire seats (Knowsley, Lathom or New Park) as performance spaces (the little-known playhouse at Prescott may have offered another possible venue locally). If John Newdigate III mounted productions of any of his plays the obvious venue would have been his Warwickshire seat, Arbury Hall. Similarly, when Sir Edward Dering was staging performances of contemporary plays, it is likely that he used his house in Surrenden, Kent, as the playing place.

⁵¹ Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, p. 93.

⁵² Cerasano and Davies, p. 125.

their author wrote them with 'the prospect of production' in mind.⁵³ The text of *Glausamond and Fidelia* includes a prologue and an epilogue which assume the presence of an audience, for example. Both address an audience and discuss their likely response: (Prologue) 'That is a happy muse which can content / All kind of audience but our intent/ Goes not so farr nor is so generall'; (Epilogue) 'we are confident / It hath as it deserues, yet 'cause 'twas meant / Onely to please the good, & yet the play / Be wholly worthles giue vs leaue to say/ If foules doe frown, & others laugh the while / The ignorance of the first makes vs to smile'.⁵⁴

The stage-directions accompanying this text also suggest a concern with practicalities of staging. Exits, entries and, occasionally, the manner of their performance, are carefully indicated. In scene two, for example, the following direction occurs: 'Enter the king and [one] before him, and then those two went out, after him' [WRO, CR 135 B766, fol. 2v]. As well as indicating the order of entry it ensures the return of the two Lords from the previous scene. Detailed directions accompany the scene in which Glausamond and Fidelia first become lovers as well. For example, Fidelia's 'welcome to this place my Glausamond' is followed by the direction, 'glausamond kneeles downe and kisses her hand' [WRO, CR 135 B766, fol. 12r]. Attention is, likewise, paid to the identification of necessary props, their use and nature being specified in some detail. For instance, when Glausamond finds Fidelia's letter (*Glausamond*. What's this thats tied so fast, / Ile open it'), the marginal stage direction reads: 'Vnties ye paper opens it and reads' [WRO, CR 135 B766, fol. 10v].

Edward Dering's adaptation of Shakespeare's two *Henry IV* plays is another text which contains implicit evidence of being prepared for staging. As Williams and Evans note, the 'manuscript discloses a more than casual concern for the technical aspects of production'.⁵⁵ Again, this is most apparent in his treatment of stage-directions. Although 'Dering generally was content to copy the stage directions as they stood in the quartos, [...] he added a few that had been omitted'.⁵⁶ Likewise, while occasionally 'deleting characters and reassigning roles', he makes direction changes 'that aim at or amplify production techniques': for instance, Dering's direction at Act IV, sc. 9 adds to the quarto's reference to Northumberland, '*alone in his garden and night-cappe*'. Evans and Williams speculate that

⁵³ T. H. Howard Hill, 'Another Warwickshire Playwright : John Newdigate of Arbury', *Renaissance Papers*, 10 (1989), 51-62 (p. 56).

⁵⁴ John Newdigate III (?), *Glausamond and Fidelia*, Warwick County Record Office, CR 135 B766, fol. 18r and fol. 17r. Hereafter all references to this play will be cited in the text.

⁵⁵ William Shakespeare, *The History of King Henry the Fourth, as revised by Sir Edward Dering Bat.*, prepared by George Walton Williams and Gwyne Blakemore Evans (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia, 1974), p. xi.

⁵⁶ Williams and Evans, p. xi.

this amplification may 'reflect Dering's recollection of London performances of the two parts'.⁵⁷ The fact that Sir Edward paid seventeen shillings and sixpence 'ffor heades of haire and beardes' in the same month that a Mr Carrington was paid four shillings 'for writinge oute ye play of K[ing] Henry ye fourth' could confirm that Dering organised a production of the adapted play at his house, Surrenden in Kent. It suggests that a play performance of some variety was being organised by Dering.⁵⁸

Indirect evidence of the conventions observed when players mounted productions in country houses is also supplied dramatically, a number of contemporary plays containing representations of private house performances (e.g. *The Book of Sir Thomas More*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *Hamlet*). Although these are fictional portraits of private house performances and, therefore cannot be assumed to reflect real practices, they are written to be recognisable depictions of such productions and are likely to provide an insight into at least some of the conventions observed when companies mounted plays in private houses in London and the provinces.⁵⁹

Professional Country House Performances

At a simple level, patrons are likely to have sponsored play performances (by travelling players or household members) because they wished to be entertained. At the same time, plays offered cultural stimulation (something craved by many provincial households and their surrounding communities), and, if companies from London were sponsored, a means of keeping up-to-date with metropolitan culture and fashions. Some country-house owners are known to have had a particular taste for drama, collecting plays for their libraries, visiting the playhouses in London, acting as patrons of dramatic companies, occasionally practising as dramatists themselves, and hosting play performances in their provincial country houses.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Williams and Evans, p. xi.

Additional evidence in the Dering manuscript could confirm that the play was prepared for performance. A scrap of paper is inserted in the manuscript containing 'eight lines of additional text to be inserted in the king's speech to follow I. 7. 20'. On the front of the paper 'are listed the names of eight characters from John Fletcher's *The Spanish Curate*, and beside them, the names of relatives, friends, and neighbours of Sir Edward's. These names presumably constitute cast lists for performances of the play which Sir Edward produced at Surrenden'. If Dering was involved in staging amateur productions of contemporary plays at Surrenden, it is possible that he was preparing the abridged version of *Henry IV* for staging by the same 'group of friends'. [Williams and Evans, p. viii.]

⁵⁸ REED: *East Kent*, ed. by James Gibson, forthcoming.

According to Gibson's transcription of the Household Accounts, the payment for the hire of the hairs and beards occurs under 18th February and the payment to Carrington under 27th February.

⁵⁹ Shakespeare is likely to have drawn upon first-hand knowledge of these conventions, having toured such venues while a member of several acting troupes, including the King's Men.

⁶⁰ As well as adapting the two parts of Shakespeare's *Henry IV* into one play, and possibly organising

SOME DIAGRAMS
EXCLUDED ON
INSTRUCTION FROM
THE UNIVERSITY

The Stanley family were renowned for their interest in theatre, players regularly performing at their Lancashire residences (Knowsley, Lathom House and New Park) and the leading members of the family patronising dramatic companies in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.⁶¹ The sixth Earl, William Stanley, was even reported to have written plays for professional players. On June 30th, George Fenner reported that, 'the Earl of Derby is busy penning comedies for the common players'. Unfortunately, none of the plays survive.⁶² However, to patronise players and to host play performances was also a way of manifesting one's gentility and power, as indicated above (p. 199).

House owners might have had more specific reasons for inviting or accepting the services of playing companies with noble or royal patrons. Players travelling and performing under a Lord, Lady or monarch's name were their servants and their representatives. How they were treated was, consequently, a reflection upon the image of their patron and carried a potential political significance. Consequently, royal companies tended to be welcomed and rewarded richly whichever country houses they performed in. This was a way of hosts demonstrating their allegiance to, and respect for, royalty. Similarly, a lord or lady might reward an important noble's company richly as a means of manifesting respect for and/ or seeking favour from a fellow peer.⁶³

play performances at his house in Surrenden, Sir Edward Dering was 'a keen collector of play-books.' His accounts reveal that 'at least two hundred and twenty-one play books were bought between 1619 and 1624'. [T. N. S. Lennam, 'Sir Edward Dering's Collection of Playbooks, 1619-1624', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 16 (1965), 145-151 (p. 147).] His purchases included in 1623 '2 volumes of [...] Shakespear's playes' (for two pounds) and 'Jhonson's playes' (for nine shillings). [Lennam, p. 148.]

⁶¹ Thomson comments on the eagerness with which the Elizabethan Stanleys became dramatic patrons: 'The fourth Earl was evidently too interested by interludes to await his inheritance of the title before employing his own troupe, since a company known as Lord Strange's Men was active in the provinces between 1563-1571. The same impatience was exhibited by his son Ferdinand, whose players are known to have performed in Exeter in 1576 and consistently thereafter'. William Stanley (the sixth Earl) went one step further, indulging not only in patronage but in playwriting. It was a pastime which his wife encouraged. Although estranged from him she 'wrote to her uncle, Robert Cecil' some time in 1599 or 1600, describing how she had been 'importuned by my Lord to intreat your favour that his man Browne, with his companye, may not be bared from ther accoustomed plaing, in maintenance wherof they have consumed the better part of their substance, if so vaine a matter shall not seame troublesum to you, I could desier that your funderance might be a meane to uphold them, for that my Lord taking delite in them, it will kepe him from mor prodigall courses'. [Peter Thomson, *Shakespeare's Professional Career* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), p. 44.]

⁶² Cited in J. T. Murray, *English Dramatic Companies*, 2 vols (London: Constable, 1910), I, p. 293.

⁶³ Occasionally, Lords and Ladies may have found themselves offered a company's services as a compliment from the patron. For example, David George suggests that Lord Dudley's Men probably first visited the Earl of Derby's home in the sixteenth century 'in compliment to their patron's mother (a daughter of the third earl of Derby).' [George, 'Jacobean Actors', p. 113.] In

Arranging Performances by Visiting Players

Troupes might be invited to visit country houses, as indicated in chapter one (p. 21). On other occasions players presented themselves unannounced at houses in the hope that their services would be accepted. In this respect, they were not always fortunate.⁶⁴ Such an arrival is depicted in *The Taming of the Shrew* (and *The Taming of a Shrew*, the so-called 'bad' quarto version of the play).⁶⁵

It was customary for players to present themselves upon arrival to a household official who would then announce their presence to the head of the household or another senior family member), as occurs when the players visit Elsinore in *Hamlet*.⁶⁶ A meeting with the head (or senior member) of the household might follow if s/he wished the players to perform, the company offering a choice of plays from which the patron could choose.⁶⁷ When the

this case, to accept their performance was courteous and a way of expressing thanks.

⁶⁴ When Lord Vaux's players arrived at Londesborough (one of the Clifford residences) in 1608-9 they were given ten shillings but were not allowed to play 'because yt was Lent.' [Wasson and Palmer, p. 8.] Similarly, in 1609 the Queen's players were paid ten shillings 'for not playing' at Londesborough because Lord Clifford 'was gone to Helmesley'. [Wasson and Palmer, p. 8.]

⁶⁵ Although on hearing their trumpet the Lord in *The Shrew* wonders if players have arrived, he only discovers that this is the case when his serving-man re-enters: 'Lord. How now? Who is it? / *Servant*. An't please your honour, players that offer service to your lordship'. [William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. by G. Blakemore Evans and others (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), Induction, 77.] (Hereafter references to the play will be cited in the text.) That the arrival of the players is not anticipated in *The Taming of a Shrew* either is revealed in their patron's response to the news of their presence. When the messenger informs the Lord that his players 'doo attend your honours pleasure here', he replies: 'The fittest time they could have chosen out'. [*A Pleasant and Conceited Historie called the Taming of a Shrew* ed. by Graham Holderness and Bryan Loughrey (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), p.45. Hereafter references to the play will be cited in the text. The Holderness and Loughrey text does not include act or scene divisions or line numbers, therefore references will cite only the relevant page number.]

⁶⁶ When the players arrive at Elsinore, Polonius, the Lord Chamberlain, comes to announce the news, unaware that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have anticipated his formal declaration:

Pol. My lord, I have news to tell you.

Ham. My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius / was an actor in Rome,-

Pol. The actors are come hither, my lord.

[William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. by G. Blakemore Evans and others (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), II. 2. 389.]

⁶⁷ In some cases, the play(s) chosen (or an outline of the content) may have been previewed before a senior household officer (or family member), as was customary at Court (the Master of the Revels performing the role of censor). The plays and other entertainments provided for the amusement of Theseus and Hippolyta during the wedding celebrations at the end of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are supposed to have been screened in this manner by Theseus' Master of Revels, Philostrate. When reciting the catalogue of 'sports' from which Theseus can choose his entertainment for the evening, Philostrate describes his reaction upon seeing a preview of the Mechanicals' version of *Pyramus and Thisbe*: 'There is not one word apt, one player fitted:/ And tragical, my noble lord, it is; For Pyramus therein doth kill himself/ which, when I saw rehearsed, I must confess,/ made mine eyes water; but more merry tears/ The passion of loud laughter never shed'. [William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. by G. Blakemore Evans and others (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), V. 1. 65. Hereafter references to

Simpson company visited Gowthwaite Hall in Nidderdale, Yorkshire in 1609-10 this involved a choice between only two plays: *The Three Shirleys* and *St Christopher*, the host, Sir John Yorke choosing the latter.⁶⁸ The fictional lord in *The Taming of A Shrew* is offered less choice, when he commands an audience with the troupe recently arrived at his country residence:

Lord. Bid one or two of them come hither straight,
Now will I fit my selfe accordinglie,
For they shall play to him when he awakes.

Enter two of the players with packs at their backs, and a boy.

Now sirs, what store of plaies have you?

San. Marrie my lorde tis calde The taming of a shrew.
Tis a good lesson for us my lord, for us that are married men.

Lord. The taming of a shrew, thats excellent sure,
Go see that you make readie straight.

(*A Shrew*, p. 45.)

The scene offers a comic representation of the usual negotiations between noble host and visiting players, part of the humour arising from the players' limited 'store' of works. In this scenario, the host lord is not offered a choice of plays.

Having reached agreement on the play(s) to be performed the Lord might arrange for the accommodation and care of the actors, and for assistance to be provided with their performance preparations, as occurs in *The Taming of the Shrew*.⁶⁹ The generous treatment companies could expect when visiting some country houses is demonstrated by the household accounts of the Clifford family. As John Wasson notes: 'The Clifford pantry accounts make clear that a troupe of players were given supper the day they arrived, breakfast and frequently

this play will be cited in the text.] Meanwhile, in *Hamlet*, Claudius expects the Prince to have exercised a supervisory role. Discomforted by the unfolding play of *The Murder of Gonzago*, he asks Hamlet: 'Have you heard the argument? Is there no offence / in't? [III. 2. 232.]

⁶⁸ London, Public Record Office, Star Chamber 8 19 / 10. Hereafter all references to this case will be cited in the text.

⁶⁹ The lord arranges for one of his servants to take the visiting players 'to the buttry/ And give them friendly welcome everyone: Let them want nothing that my house affords.' [*The Shrew*, Induction, 102.] Similarly, in *Hamlet*, the Prince commands Polonius to 'see the players well be-stow'd' [II. 2. 522.]

dinner the next day before they had to leave'.⁷⁰ On some occasions even the stabling and feeding of their horses was provided for by the Lord (e.g. in 1598 a payment of 'xx s.' to Lord Derby's Men for performing three plays is followed by a payment of 'iij viijd' to 'thomas tomes for their horssmeayte three nyghtes and laiding').⁷¹

The length of companies' visits and the number of performances given varied, as indicated in chapter 1 (p. 25), and country-house patrons offered financial rewards of differing generosity.⁷² Sometimes troupes may not have received any financial reward. When Lord Clinton's players were at Londesborough in 1600-1, for example, they were given dinner, supper and breakfast during their visit but were not paid any money according to the accounts. This may mean that they did not perform or that they accepted the food and accommodation as payment in kind.⁷³

Amateur Household Productions and their Organisation

Like professional performances, amateur household productions might be mounted at country houses as part of the celebrations of a specific event, but they were not confined to special occasions. By definition, household productions are those which mainly involved household members (potentially, staff and family). However, family friends and neighbours may have been involved as performers and stage hands as well occasionally. Sir Edward Dering's cast list for *The Spanish Curate* (possibly performed at his country house at Surrenden) not only includes a figure named as 'Jack of the buttery', who presumably worked in the household buttery, but fellow Derings (e.g. 'Edw: Dering', 'Thom: Deryng') and neighbouring nobles (e.g. 'Sr Thomas Wotton' and Sr Warrhum St leger').⁷⁴

⁷⁰ John Wasson, 'Elizabethan and Jacobean Travelling Companies', *Theatre Notebook*, 42 (1988), 51-57 (p. 54).

⁷¹ Wasson, 'Elizabethan and Jacobean Travelling Companies', p. 53.

⁷² At Londesborough in 1611-12, the Queen's Men were paid for playing 'one play this day after dinn'; while in 1619-20 Lord Derby's Men were paid for performing 'fyve severall Playes' at the house and the King's Men stayed from a 'Tewsdai till fryday'. [Stone, 'Companies of Players', p. 21, p. 24.] Payments could be as small as the two shillings the Shuttleworths paid 'the plaeres of nantewyche' in 1588-9, or as large as the four pounds the Earl of Derby's players received for performing four plays at Londesborough in 1611-2.

[George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 167 and p. 186.

Wasson and Palmer, p. 9.]

⁷³ Wasson and Palmer, p. 8.

⁷⁴ Williams and Evans, p.4.

Doubling was used in amateur drama occasionally. When the parish of Methley in Yorkshire mounted a play in 1614 its casting scheme called for some actors to perform more than one part ('Richard Dickonsonne, for instance, played both of the king's parts'). [John Wasson, 'A Parish Play in the West Riding of Yorkshire', in *English Parish Drama*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Wim Husken (Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996), 149-157 (p. 155).]

Similarly, while the organiser of such productions is likely to have been a senior household official or the head of the household, friends and neighbours may have provided assistance in preparing for performances. Hence, although Sir Edward Dering is likely to have been the co-ordinator and director of any productions at Surrenden, friends, relations and household members are likely to have helped with the preparations as well as the acting.

Performance Preparations for Professional and Amateur productions

Having discussed a number of aspects of country house performances in chapter one, a brief survey will suffice here. The place of performance is only rarely stated in household accounts but what evidence there is indicates that plays were usually performed in the hall and often in the evening, although performances in the day are not unknown.⁷⁵ The great hall (found in typical country houses, palaces, and university colleges) may even have been the inspiration and model for the hall playhouses of London. Other spaces such as great chambers may have been used occasionally (as noted above, p. 194). Girouard suggests that when the Queen's Men visited Hardwick House in 1600, they performed in the great chamber or the gallery, rather than the hall.⁷⁶

Wherever they were mounted, plays staged in Elizabethan and Jacobean country houses are generally thought to have been performed on stages. Certainly, when the Simpsons performed *St Christopher* at Sir John Yorke's house in 1609-10, they appear to have used a stage platform (as will be discussed in the case study of the performance in part II of the chapter). There is, however, no evidence of the nature or size of the stages used. Parallel evidence from provincial civic venues and university colleges suggests that professional touring troupes used demountable wooden scaffolds (probably rectangular in shape).⁷⁷

⁷⁵ For example, the play performed during new year week, 1588-89 at Lathom House was given in 'the halle'. [George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 181.] In the 1588-9 Stanley accounts several references are also made to performances occurring in the evening. There was a play 'at nyght' during the week, 29 December- 4 January; and the Queen's Men were paid for performing 'ij severall nyghtes' during the week, 6-10 July. [George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 181.]

⁷⁶ Mark Girouard, *Hardwick Hall* (London: National Trust, 1989), p. 33.

That performances were occasionally given in great chambers finds dramatic confirmation in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Bottom and the Mechanicals performing in the great chamber at Theseus' court. When discussing how they will stage the play, Bottom notes that they may 'have a casement of the great/ chamber window where we play open, and the moon may/ shine in at the casement.' [III. 1. 48.]

⁷⁷ There does not appear to be any evidence in household accounts of materials for stages being provided, suggesting either that companies brought their own demountable platforms or improvised using available materials and furniture (e.g. benches and planks).

When performing in halls, such platforms might have been placed against the screen but are perhaps more likely to have been placed at the upper end of the room, where the most important

The manner in which audiences were accommodated is another matter for speculation and probably varied depending on the nature and size of the audience expected to attend a production. The few surviving accounts of provincial country house performances do not explicitly specify whether audiences were standing or seated. However, a small, elite body of spectators (e.g. made up of family members only or family and prestigious guests) could probably expect to be accommodated on chairs.⁷⁸ Some forms may have been provided in the body of the hall or chamber if a larger, more diverse audience was assembled, chairs being reserved for the most important spectators. (This would parallel arrangements in the hall playhouses of London.) Standing spectators may have been admitted as well. Indeed, if a particularly great body of spectators was to be accommodated it may have been necessary to limit the seating provided, most of the audience being required to stand. Household servants, possibly including a marshall of the hall, may have managed or helped with such preparations of the playing space.

As visiting companies often performed within a relatively short time of their arrival they are perhaps unlikely to have had an opportunity to rehearse prior to performance. Like the company in *The Taming of A Shrew* they would have to make themselves 'readie straight' [*A Shrew*, p. 45] (e.g. in 1589-90 the records for Knowsley House, Lancashire imply that when the Queen's company visited during the week 31 Aug.- 6 Sept, they arrived on a Saturday 'and played at nyght').⁷⁹ Performers in household productions may have been more fortunate, possibly engaging in several rehearsals before the official performance.⁸⁰

household members would usually sit. The likely location of stages when performances were mounted in other spaces is even more difficult to establish. For instance, in Hardwick's great chamber a number of areas could accommodate a stage, including the windowed recess opposite the fireplace (measuring c. 21 feet by 19 feet) and either side of the fireplace at the upper or lower end of the chamber [see plate 34]. [McMillin and MacLean, p. 82.]

⁷⁸ Chairs remained 'still very much "seats of honour"'. Tittler records how, 'in houses of the middling sorts of people in Norwich and Oxfordshire, [...] chairs were still not entirely common at the turn of the seventeenth century'. [Robert Tittler, *Architecture and Power: The Town Hall and the English Urban Community, c 1500-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1991), p. 113.]

⁷⁹ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 181.

⁸⁰ Whether amateur performers in household productions routinely memorised their parts is not known. Practices may have varied between households and occasions (e.g. if a play was being mounted for a special occasion and before a large audience, rather than as an impromptu evening's recreation for the household, more effort may have been made to learn parts and to perform impressively). As Shakespeare's representation of the Mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* indicates, it was not unusual for other amateur performers to rehearse and memorise their roles. When the parish of Donnington-on-bain decided to mount a play in 1563-5, those involved even agreed 'to fine players' who did not observe rehearsal times for the parish play. [Cited in Ian Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts and Records of Britain: A Chronological Topography to 1558* (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1984), p. 123.]

Like the arrival of professional players, the commencement of performances may have been announced by the sounding of trumpets. As indicated in Chapter 1 (p. 18), travelling companies customarily carried with them a stock of apparel and stage furniture, and appear to have been capable of staging sophisticated special effects. It is, therefore, likely that company performances in country houses were not only mounted upon stages, but were costumed productions, involving the use of props and stage furniture. When performing in noble houses, companies may even have been assisted in their preparations, being provided with access to additional props and costumes, as some nobles appear to have maintained their own costume wardrobes (such as Alexander Houghton of Lea who bequeathed his 'playe clothes' to Sir Thomas Hesketh in his will in 1581).⁸¹

Textual evidence (in some of the plays written by country-house owners) suggests that amateur household productions could be equally sophisticated in their staging, incorporating props, costumes and staging illusions, although, again, practices may have varied according to the wealth and enthusiasm of households and the auspices for performances. Lady Mary Wroth's play, *Love's Victory*, possibly performed at Sir Edward Dering's Surrenden house, calls for numerous props and special costumes in its stage directions; and in 1623 we know that Dering paid 'ffor heades of haire and beardes', presumably for amateur productions at Surrenden.⁸² *Glausamond and Fidelia* (possibly written and performed at Arbury Hall, Warwickshire in the 1620s), likewise, requires the provision of several props including a letter (fol. 7r), 'holberds' (fol. 14v), a scaffold (fol. 14r), a cup (fol. 16v), and musical accompaniment (e.g. fol. 6v, fol. 9v and fol. 11v) [WRO CR 135 B766].⁸³

⁸¹ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 350.

The troupe in *The Taming of a Shrew* expect the Lord's household to furnish certain props for their performance, and the lord calls for the actors' needs to be supplied. Sander asks to borrow 'a shoulder of mutton [...] And a little vinegre to make our Divell rore'; the Lord responds, 'very well: sirha see that they want nothing.' [*A Shrew*, p. 45.]

⁸² Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, p. 125.

Gibson, *REED: East Kent*, forthcoming.

⁸³ The evidence of masques written for performance in noble houses confirms that country households were capable of mounting impressive theatrical productions, involving stage machinery and rich costumes. The masque which Marston wrote for the 'Entertainment of Alice, Dowager Countess of Derby' when she visited Ashby in 1607 included the following scenery and stage machinery: 'At the approach of the countess into the great chamber the hobays played until the room was marshalled: which once ordered, a traverse slid away; presently a cloud was seen to move up and down almost to the top of the great chamber, upon which Cynthia was discovered riding.' [John Marston, 'The Entertainment of Alice, Dowager Countess of Derby' in *The Works of John Marston*, ed. by A. H. Bullen, 3 vols (London: John C. Nimmo, MDCCCXXXVII), III, p. 394.]

PART II: CASE STUDY

As a complement and supplement to Part I's general survey of playing in country houses, Part II presents a closer analysis of a performance in a specific country house. The house concerned is Gowthwaite Hall, the residence of Sir John Yorke of Nidderdale, and the performance to be discussed was mounted in 1609-10 by a company of itinerant players, led by Christopher and Robert Simpson.

Record of the players' presence and performance at Gowthwaite is preserved in the archives of the Court of Star Chamber, the play's performance becoming one of the subjects of a Star Chamber suit pressed by local puritan justice, Sir Stephen Procter against Sir John Yorke. The drama which provoked the controversy was titled *St Christopher*. The play told the story of Raphabus (or Reprobus),

‘that neither feared God nor the Divell, nor was of any religion, but would serve the mightiest man upon the earth, and having served two kinges and an Emperour and hearinge the Divell was of more might than they were, lefte them, and betooke himselfe to the Divell his service.’ Then Reprobus discovered the Devil feared the cross ‘whereupon Raphabus (Reprobus) left the Divell saying there was a mightier man than he was, and went to the crosse’. Reprobus submitted to the cross, received instruction from a hermit, did penance for his sins and received the new name of Christopher.⁸⁴

The play in itself was not seditious. The controversy arose from the alleged insertion of a blasphemous interlude. In the inserted interlude, it was said that an English Minister and a ‘popishe preist’ were ‘personated or acted’ (PRO, STAC 8 / 19/ 10, mb. 6), and a ‘disputacon counterfeyted betwixt him that plaid the Englishe Minister and hi[m] [that] plaid the Popishe preist toucheinge matters of religion’ (PRO, STAC 8/ 19/ 10, mb. 18). In keeping with Star Chamber proceedings, depositions were taken from numerous witnesses of the performance, including several of the actors, such as Thomas Pant. The depositions contain detailed information about the play and its staging at Gowthwaite Hall, providing a valuable insight into the Nidderdale performance.

The deposition made by the company's ‘fool’, William Harrison, is additionally intriguing, alluding to the performance of two other plays at Gowthwaite: ‘Perocles, prince of Tire, And

⁸⁴ Boddy, p. 105.

[...] king Lere' (PRO, STAC 8 19/ 10, mb. 30). He noted that these 'so plaid were vsuall playes And such as were acted in Comon and publick places and staiges' (PRO, STAC 8 / 19/ 10, mb. 30). To find an itinerant company, based in the north of England, staging plays derived from the London stage and only recently published is striking . As Boddy notes, it suggests that the Simpsons made 'arrangements to procure the very latest, most popular and fashionable plays from London'.⁸⁵ While it has been suggested that some companies (provincial and amateur) used printed play texts as prompt-books for their own productions, direct evidence of such practice has been in short supply .⁸⁶ The Gowthwaite case demonstrates that acting companies even in places far removed from London geographically and culturally had access to, and were interested in, performing plays fashionable in the capital. By implication the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries had a role to play in the cultures of provincial communities as well as that of the metropolis.

That a predominantly recusant troupe, with a reputation for performing 'popish plaies', should also choose to carry plays derived from the London theatres in their dramatic repertoire is, likewise, fascinating. Intriguing questions are raised about drama's potentially dual role in the eyes of the Simpson company as commercial ware and vehicle for subversive religious propaganda, and about the possible interaction of, and dialogue between, mainstream and subversive cultures in early modern England.

As an interesting cultural moment and a vivid example of private house play production, the Simpson troupe's performances at Gowthwaite Hall in 1609-10 provide rich material for a study of country house drama and its place in early modern regional culture. As the troupe's performance of the *Reprobus* play is especially well documented, the *St Christopher* production is made the focus of the case study. (The absence of any descriptions of the *Lear* and *Pericles* performances prevents us from reconstructing their staging at Gowthwaite hall in the same detail, but some account of their likely performance is possible and is offered in appendix vii as a supplement to the reconstruction of *St Christopher's* staging at Sir John Yorke's house.)

⁸⁵ *King Lear* was printed in 1608 and *Pericles* in 1609. [Boddy, p. 106.]

⁸⁶ C. J. Sisson was one of the first scholars to collect evidence of such practices. At the end of an article on 'Shakespeare Quartos as prompt-copies', in which he discusses the Simpson troupe, Sisson concludes, 'that there is sufficient evidence of the use of early printed plays as prompt-copies by their purchasers'. Furthermore, while noting that 'there is no certain instance of such a usage by any company of its own plays in quarto form', he argues that 'the probabilities, based on textual analysis and on general considerations, appear to me to be strongly in favour of the conclusion that the usage was general. [C. J. Sisson, 'Shakespeare Quartos as prompt-copies. With Some account of Cholmeley's Players and a new Shakespeare allusion', *Review of English Studies*, 70 (1942), 129-143, p. 143.]

If we are to reconstruct the Gowthwaite performance of *St Christopher* as a cultural event we first need to place it in its historical and cultural context. A brief account of early modern Yorkshire and its dramatic culture, and of the Simpsons, their host (Sir John Yorke) and Gowthwaite Hall therefore prefaces the discussion of the play production.

Placing the Simpson performance in context

i- Culture in one of the 'dark corners' of the land ⁸⁷

Geographically far removed from the political and cultural capital of England, the north of England was in many ways a 'separate world'. ⁸⁸ Its social fabric differed from that of most southern regions, the sparse, dispersed populations of counties such as Yorkshire continuing to be country dwellers for the most part and 'dependent either directly or indirectly, on agriculture for their livelihood'. ⁸⁹ Even more significantly, many northern communities persisted in the Catholic faith. As Hill records: 'When Grindal entered his northern province in 1570, he told Cecil that "this seemeth to be, as it were, another church, rather than a member of the rest".' Often these communities were supported by local conservative nobles and gentry. As Cliffe notes, 'it was in the parishes which had Catholic manor houses that the largest concentration of recusants were to be found.' ⁹⁰ Indeed, a number of noble houses functioned as centres of recusancy, promoting Catholic culture. Grosmont Priory, near Whitby in Yorkshire, appears to have been such a centre. In 1599 Robert Cecil was informed that 'most dangerous men, both priests and fugitives' resorted there. Patronising Catholic players was potentially another way in which recusant nobles could affirm their religious identity. ⁹¹

⁸⁷ This phrase coined by Fanshawe is used by Christopher Hill in 'Puritans and "the Dark corners of the Land"', in *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth Century England* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), p. 3.

⁸⁸ Girouard, *Robert Smythson and the Architecture of the Elizabethan Era*, p. 208.

⁸⁹ Cliffe, p. 2.

⁹⁰ Hill, p. 6.

Cliffe, p. 207.

The strength of Catholicism in the North and the potential threat it posed to the government was demonstrated in dramatic fashion in 1569, when a number of northern Earls mounted the Northern rebellion. Although the insurrection was quashed the problem of Catholic recusancy was not. Notably, at the height of the rebellion from York (December, 1569), Sir Ralph Sadler 'roundly declared that there were not ten gentlemen "in all the countrey that do favour and allowe of her Majesties proceedings in the cause of religion". ' [Cliffe, p. 168.] This may have been an exaggeration, but it indicates the perceived prevalence and persistence of Catholicism in the North.

⁹¹ Cliffe, p. 206.

Catholic interest in theatre was not without parallel or precedent. As Alison Shell notes: 'the virtue of the dramatic, and especially the visual elements of the dramatic, was accepted in Catholicism to a degree it never was by Protestantism. [Alison Shell, 'English Catholicism and Drama, 1578-1688'

It was the combined industrial immaturity and religious traditionalism of the north which prompted some contemporaries to characterise the region as a 'dark corner of the land', and northerners as 'a wild race of people, unlettered, lawless and economically backward'.⁹²

ii- Dramatic Activity in the North

Despite the long distances (and the prolonged periods of travelling involved) professional companies from London occasionally made the journey northwards to visit towns and country houses in counties such as Yorkshire and Lancashire (for example, according to Wasson 'fifty-one companies between 1450 and 1632 at a preliminary cursory count' visited the West Riding of Yorkshire').⁹³ Places such as York and country seats such as Dunkenhall (Lancashire) and Londesborough (Yorkshire) were visited regularly by acting troupes in the early modern period. (York was visited by at least two or three companies annually in the Elizabethan era, and in 1587 and 1593 the corporation rewarded as many as six troupes. Similarly, the Walmesley family at Dunkenhall were visited by at least two companies annually between 1613-1624; and the Cliffords, at Londesborough and Skipton Castle rewarded several troupes almost every year between 1595 and 1625.)⁹⁴

However, the region as a whole appears to have been less frequented by professional companies than the southern provinces. On the other hand (and perhaps by way of compensation) there are records of numerous local companies touring the region throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, some on a regular basis (e.g. the players of Blackburn, Rochdale, Downham, Durham, Garstang, Nantwich, Penrith and Preston; troupes led respectively by the Simpsons and Richard Hudson and Edward Lister also toured in the

(unpublished doctoral thesis, Oxford University, 1992), p. 5.] More specifically, the continental Jesuit colleges, with whom a number of northern households had links, routinely mounted religious dramas and advocated the value of theatre as a didactic tool. As Motter records: 'the Jesuits advanced a moral appeal, as stated in the prologue to an edifying Latin tragedy acted at the College de Borges in the seventeenth century: "even as we play, it is necessary to direct morals towards piety, to conduct them through great images to great deeds, and to plant in their hearts the love of Christ'. [T. H. Vail Motter, *The School Drama in England* (London, New York, Toronto: Longmans, 1929), pp. 298-9]. Hugh Aveling speculates that recusant actors such as the Simpsons may even have been inspired and coached by college members: 'The players were [...] hardly educated men. We are bound to suspect that they had been coached by priests- who had been brought up to the performance of plays at Douai'. [Hugh Aveling, *Northern Catholics: The Catholic Recusants of the North Riding of Yorkshire, 1558-1790* (London, Dublin, Melbourne: Chapman, 1966), p. 54.]

⁹² Hill, p. 3.

Cliffe, p. 2.

⁹³ Wasson 'A Parish Play', p. 153.

⁹⁴ Johnston and Rogerson, I, p. 455.

George, *REED: Lancashire*, pp. 185-194.

Wasson and Palmer, pp. 8-10.

north).⁹⁵ As the names reveal, some were town troupes, possibly patronised by their local corporation, while others were itinerant companies without a patron, noble or civic.

The latter had to be careful when touring, however, if they were to avoid falling foul of the law, for Elizabethan and Jacobean legislation outlawed unlicensed companies. Those who trespassed this ruling faced fines and other harsh penalties. Predictably, not all local troupes observed the law and occasionally faced prosecution, alongside their hosts, for their unlicensed performances. The company led by Hudson and Lister in north Yorkshire was presented at the quarter sessions in Helmesley in 1612 on this charge. They were in trouble again in 1615-6, being sentenced this time at the quarter sessions in Thirsk (on 10 April). As Boddy reports, the seven people listed as belonging to the troupe were accused of 'being players of interludes, vagabonds and sturdy beggars'; and Richard Hudson, at least, 'pleaded guilty and was sentenced to be whipped at Thirsk.'⁹⁶ That such companies and their hosts were prepared to risk being fined and otherwise punished is revealing. It suggests that there was a keen taste for dramatic entertainment in many northern communities.

Local companies appear to have performed mostly in inns and private town and country houses; records of local troupes performing in civic venues are rare. This is reflected in the list of people presented at the 1615-6 Thirsk quarter sessions for having hosted the itinerant Hudson and Lister company. In most cases the individuals (predominantly 'yeoman' farmers) were being presented for hosting the troupe in their private houses. However, a couple of the performances may have been given at inns, as 'at least two of the accused were ale-house keepers: Sadler at Burneston, and Stubbs at Wilton'.⁹⁷ The touring patterns of the Simpson-led troupe appear to have been very similar.

iii-The Simpson Company

The Simpson-led company which performed *St Christopher*, *Pericles* and *King Lear* at Gowthwaite Hall was an itinerant troupe, mainly consisting of recusant Yorkshire men and boys.⁹⁸ Officially without a patron, the players were not licensed to perform and were

⁹⁵ Like the Simpsons, Richard Hudson and Edward Lister were artisans by training (both were weavers), but chose to lead an itinerant acting company. [Boddy, pp. 108-9.]

⁹⁶ Boddy, pp. 108-9 and p.111.

⁹⁷ Boddy, p. 114.

⁹⁸ Not all of the company members were Catholic recusants. In his deposition for the Star Chamber court case following the performance of *St Christopher*, William Harrison states that 'he is no recusant but cometh orderly to the Churche on Saboath and other holy dayes and receyved the holie communion at Easter last and hath so receyved the same the space of twenty yeares now last

subsequently punished as vagabonds when apprehended in 1612 and 1615-6.⁹⁹ However, they may have received support and protection informally. Certainly, in 1609 Sir Thomas Hoby, a locally well-known Puritan Justice, claimed that Sir Richard Cholmley patronised and helped the troupe, shielding them from arrest by Hoby and his officers and encouraging them in their performance of 'popish plaies':

Although hee knoweth your Maiesties lawes made against Stage players and is sworne to execute the office of Justice of peace accordinge to the lawes statuts and Customes of this your highnes realme of England did not withstandinge since your Maiesties last generall and free pardon not only ghiue leaue vnto the sayd staige players the most of them beinge obstinate popish recusants [...] vnder his hand and seale to travaile about the Country But the sayd Staige players Cominge into his sayd fathers howse at Roxby aforesayde being within the Constablers of Thornton and fformanby after the Constables ther had received and taken notice of a warrant sent from the sayd Sir Thomas for the apprehension of them yf they should fortune to come thither the sayd Sir Richard Cholmley being then present at his said fathers howse in despite of the sayd Sir Thomas his warrante did not only suffer but also did giue leave and lycence vnto the sayd players to play diuers Stage playes [...] Conteyninge in them much poperie and abuse of the lawe and Justice before his sayd father himself and others makinge himself disporte therby and suffered them to depart without apprehendinge any of them, wherby they being Countenanced and takeinge encouragement in their lewde Courses wandered vp and downe in the Countrey and played popish playes contrary to your Maiesties lawes and statuts in that case made and provided. (PRO, STAC 8 12/11, mb. 2)

Although not openly recusant, Cholmley, who was an important landowner locally, may have been a Catholic (and his wife was almost certainly a recusant, allegedly hiding and entertaining numerous priests at the couple's Whitby home).¹⁰⁰ He may have offered the Simpson troupe assistance, therefore, (e.g. protecting them from arrest) even if he was not their official patron as Hoby suggests.¹⁰¹ Clearly, he and his father watched performances by

past'. [PRO, STAC 8 19/10, mb. 24.]

⁹⁹ Boddy, p. 108, p. 110.

¹⁰⁰ In January 1593 Catholic priest, Thomas Clarke admitted having preached in a number of Yorkshire houses including at 'Mrs Chamblies [Cholmeley's] of Whatbe [Whitby] in her husbandes absence'. [Cited in Cliffe, p. 191.]

¹⁰¹ In alleging that Sir Richard was the troupe's patron, Hoby may have been simply seeking to blacken Cholmley's reputation. As a suspected Catholic, Richard Cholmley was precisely the kind of person whom Hoby as a Puritan activist was most keen to attack and remove from positions of

the company. However, Sir Richard's interest in the troupe's productions was not necessarily or exclusively religious. He may have been primarily motivated by a personal taste for theatrical entertainment, inspired by his experiences of drama at university.¹⁰²

power in regional government. However, his antipathy for Cholmley was probably rendered more acute by a series of conflicts between them in the early years of the seventeenth century, including an acrimonious incident in 1600. A 'party of young men including William Eure, son of Lord Eure of Malton, and Richard Cholmley had called at Hackness for hospitality while on a hunting expedition' and reportedly behaved in a rude and offensive manner. [Boddy, p. 97.] Hoby enclosed an account of what happened in a letter which he sent to the Privy Council complaining about the incident (Sept. 5, 1600): 'On Tuesday the 26th Aug. Sir Thomas hoby was standing in his hall at Hackness, when there came in Sir W. Ewre's footboy and said that his master and sundry other gentlemen would come that night. Sir Thomas answered that he was sorry, his wife was ill and he not so well provided for them as he wished.' About two hours later the party arrived (except for William Dawney). Hoby greeted them in the dining room. 'Presently after this Sir William Ewre's footboy took forth cards and laid them on the table, wherewith some of the gentlemen exercised until supper. [...] After supper Sir Thomas willed to have their chambers made ready, and came himself to bring them to their lodgings, but they being at dice told him they would play awhile, so he did leave them and went down and set his household to prayers as they were accustomed. When Sir Thomas and his family had begun to sing a psalm, the company above made an extraordinary noise with their feet, and some of them stood upon the stairs at a window opening into the hall, and laughed all the time of prayers. The next morning they went to breakfast in the dining room, and Sir Thomas hearing them call for more wine, sent for the key of the cellar and told them they should come by no more wine from him.' After this Mr Eure asked to see Lady Margaret, who was ill in bed, before his departure. 'At his coming she prayed him to depart the house in quietness, and going to the rest of the company, he called a servant of Sir Thomas, and said "Tell thy master he hath sent me scurvy messages, and the next time I meet him I will tell him so, if he be upon the bench, and will pull him by the beard".' [Cited in *The Private Life of an Elizabethan Lady: The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599-1605*, ed. by Joanna Moody (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1998), pp. 240-1.] Hoby noted in his complaint of 1609 that Cholmley 'was iustly censored in your Maiesties high Courte of Starrchamber' for his part in the 'disgrace and outrage' offered Hoby in his home (PRO, STAC 8 12/ 11, mb. 2).

He also cited more recent offences in his complaint. This included accusing Cholmley of obstructing Hoby's work 'preuenting regratinge and forstallinge of Corne and setting order for the bringinge of Corne to the market' (a job he assumed responsibility for in his capacity as a justice). Hoby reported that 'haueinge appoynted a day and place for execucon of your Maiesties Service [...] The sayd Sir Richard Cholmley voluntarily and malitiously repayed thither and openly and and insolently before the people sought to disgrace the sayd Sir Thomas Hoby and published that his warrants were vnlawful, and that hee had vnlawfully entred into the service and offered many malicious and provokeinge speeches against the sayd Sir Thomas hoby wherby the sevice for your Maiestie appoynted Could not be effected' (PRO, STAC 8 12/ 11, mb. 2).

In his response to Hoby's accusation in 1609 Cholmley denied that he was popishly affected or that he had licensed the Simpson players to perform: 'And whereas this defendant is very slanderouslie taxed with countenancinge popishe Recusants and stage players [...] This defendant aunswereth [...] that he is noe popishe Recusant nor anie way inclined to poperye [...] and [...] saith that he gaue noe such Lycence [to players] as is [...] menconed neither doeth he knowe anie of the players of Egton to be popishe Recusants' (PRO, STAC 8 12 / 11, mb. 1). However, in claiming not to know of any evidence of the playing company's largely recusant membership he was probably being economical with the truth. Indeed, this disclaimer may have been another way of protecting the troupe as well as himself.

¹⁰² Sir Richard acted in at least one academic play and is likely to have seen many more. In his Memoirs Hugh Cholmley recalled how Sir Richard 'acted the part of a woman in a comedy at Trinity College, in Cambridge, he did it with great applause, and was esteemed beautiful'. He played the part of Ardelia in *Leander* [1597-8]. [REED: *Cambridge*, ed. by Alan H. Nelson, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1989), I, p. 374, II, p. 721.]

When considering patrons' reasons for accepting the Simpson troupes services, it is worth remembering that they did not exclusively perform religious (or pro-Catholic) dramas. Their

The company was led, and probably founded by, Robert and Christopher Simpson, 'two cordwainers, who lived in the hamlet of Westonby in Egton' (the pair were related but it is not clear whether they were brothers or uncle and nephew).¹⁰³ Egton was an area known for its large numbers of Catholics, and the Simpson family appear to have been amongst this recusant community (e.g. Christopher Simpson was presented as a 'recusant of Egton' in 1611). The date of the troupe's establishment is not known but the Simpsons were active dramatically as early as 1595 when the pair were identified as players in the list of recusants in the Province of York, prepared by the York Court of High Commission.¹⁰⁴

The precise size and make-up of the remainder of the company varied over the years. However, the troupe that performed *St Christopher* in 1609-10 apparently consisted of fifteen members: Robert and Christopher Simpson, 'their cousin Edward Whitfield, 20, [...] his brother Robert Whitfield, William Harrison [...], Edward Consett, George Ellerby, James Button, George Hudson, Edward Millington, Richard, John and Cuthbert Simpson', Thomas Pant (15) and Robert Lownde (14).¹⁰⁵ The latter two members were boy players, as their ages indicate. It would appear that the Simpsons recruited the boys as apprentice players, paralleling the practices of professional companies in Elizabethan and Jacobean London. Although the boys were not necessarily originally or explicitly recruited as such apprentices, as Thomas Pant revealed.

In 1610 (and perhaps as a consequence of the controversy surrounding the company's *St Christopher* performance at Gowthwaite Hall) Pant, who was apprentice to Christopher Simpson, complained at the Topcliffe quarter sessions 'that he hath not beene imployed in his

repertory included plays of general appeal and they performed for non-Catholics as well as recusant northerners.

¹⁰³ Boddy, p. 95.

¹⁰⁴ The list of recusants in Egton Chapelry alluded to 'Robert Simpson Cordiner a plaier of interlutes' and to 'Christopher Cordiner a single man who is a plaier of Interludes.' ['Miscellanea: Recusant Records', ed. by Clare Talbot, Catholic Record Society, 53 (Newport: R. H. Johns, 1960), pp. 32-3.]

Boddy records that Egton 'had more Catholics throughout penal times than any other Yorkshire village. And the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity were openly ignored there and in surrounding villages.' Furthermore, 'the inhabitants of Egton enjoyed during the 1590s the protection of three large landowners all of whom were Catholics or had strong Catholic connections' (the families were the Cholmeleys, the Smiths of Egton Bridge and the Salvins of Newbiggin Manor). [Boddy, p. 95.]

¹⁰⁵ Boddy, p. 109.

The size of the troupe differs little from what Bradley estimates to have been the conventional size of professional companies during this period: 'Over long periods of time their standard composition was of sixteen' people. [D. Bradley, *From Texts to Performance in the Elizabethan Theatre: Preparing the Play for the Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), pp. 56-7.]

occupacion according to the Covenantes of his Indenture made betwene him & his said Master', and therefore wished to be freed from his bond to Simpson.¹⁰⁶ Pant had been apprenticed to Simpson to be trained in the trade of shoemaking. In practice, he claimed that he hade been 'trayned vp for iij yeres last past in wandring in ye Contry & playing of Interludes as a player.'¹⁰⁷

As well as consisting of a number of the Simpsons' kin, their fellow performers were, like their leaders, mainly artisans by training and recusants. For example, John Simpson was a 'weaver' and presented as a recusant in 1614 and 1641. Edward Whitfield was a 'cordwainer of Egton' and in '1614 had not been to church for 10 or 12 years', while Edward Consett was a 'tailor of Egton', presented for recusancy in 1632 and 1641.¹⁰⁸ However, there were exceptions to the latter. William Harrison was a declared Anglican and Robert Lownde claimed that he was prepared to take communion although he had not done so yet (PRO, STAC 8 19/ 10, mb. 24, mb. 26).

The role of the Simpsons as actor-managers, likewise, finds its parallel in the world of professional theatre in the period, many London troupes nominating one or two leading members to deal with managerial jobs, such as the collection of fees for court and touring performances. Boddy suggests that the company may have been organised 'on the same basis as most companies of the day' more generally, recognising,

three grades of actors: the senior, experienced members [...] called the *sharers* because they took the larger share of rewards received; secondly, the less skillful *hired men* taken on for a given tour and paid a wage [...]; and thirdly, the *apprentices* and other boys who would take female roles, children's parts and provide the musical accompaniment.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ North Allerton, North Yorkshire County Record Office, QSM 2 / 2, fol. 17 (from a transcription held at the REED office, Toronto).

¹⁰⁷ North Yorkshire CRO, QSM 2/ 2, fol. 17 (transcription held at the REED office, Toronto). The Court decided that Pant should be freed from his indentures, as Simpson was 'an obstinate & convicted popishe Recusant hidinge himself so as the lawe cannot be executed against him.' [North Yorkshire County Record Office, QSM 2 / 2, fol. 17 (transcription held at the REED office).] In using the traditional system of craft apprenticeship to recruit young players the company may have been paralleling metropolitan practice. Bentley refers to 'three records' which suggest that sometimes the boys of London companies were 'officially apprenticed to an actor who was a member of one of the London guilds but trained his apprentices to act in his company's plays rather than in the business of a grocer or a goldsmith'. [Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Profession of Players in Shakespeare's Time, 1590-1642* (Princeton and Guildford: Princeton University, 1984), p. 125]

¹⁰⁸ Boddy, p. 102.

¹⁰⁹ Boddy, p. 119.

What evidence there is indicates that the company, like licensed professional troupes, followed regular touring routes in ‘Cleveland and the vale of Yorkshire’. ¹¹⁰ The most detailed information about the company’s touring habits is provided by the records of Helmesley quarter sessions, 9 January, 1615-16. This was one of the occasions when the players fell foul of contemporary laws and were presented as vagrants. In this instance, the names of some of their hosts were also obtained and the individuals fined for ‘receiving the players in their dwelling houses, giving them bread and drink, and suffering them to escape unpunished’. ¹¹¹ In each case the date of the host’s offence is included affording an indirect insight into the company’s peregrinations at the beginning of 1615. The itinerary which emerges is as follows:

Ralph Rookeby, esquire of Marske	1st Jan.
Will Stephenson, gentleman of Wilton	2nd Jan.
John Wildon, gentleman of Marton	3rd Jan.
John Gower, esquire of Stainsby	4th Jan.
Will Chaytor, esquire of Croft	6th Jan.
Marmaduke Vincent, esquire of Smeaton	7th Jan.
Thomas Best, gentleman of Hornby	8th Jan.
Richard Lodge, yeoman of Appleton Wiske	8th Jan.
Richard Stringer, yeoman of Lealholm	13th Jan. ¹¹²

As can be seen, the troupe performed mainly in private houses, including the homes of nobles, yeomen and labourers. ¹¹³ They also visited many houses in a short period of time, covering considerable distances at some points (e.g. travelling from Appleton to Lealholm). If they performed at each house, as is likely, this sample itinerary indicates that when touring the troupe’s schedule was intensive, the company performing almost every day.

Many of the houses in which the Simpson troupe performed were the homes of Catholic sympathisers or recusants. The list of hosts penalised in 1615 included several Catholics. The Rokebys of Marske were known recusants. Indeed, ‘the family resources had been depleted in paying recusancy fines.’ Sir John Gower of Stainsby and Richard Lodge were also

¹¹⁰ Boddy, p. 104.

¹¹¹ Boddy, p. 110.

¹¹² Boddy, p. 110.

¹¹³ When questioned during the Star Chamber case, William Harrison spoke of performing in ‘vther gentlemens houses’ as well as Gowthwaite Hall (PRO STAC 8 19/ 10, mb. 30).

recusants; and John Wildon of Marton, 'had been a recusant' although he 'probably conformed in 1612'.¹¹⁴ The troupe did not confine their visits to Catholic houses, however. There is no indication that their other hosts at the beginning of 1615 were recusants, and in his Star Chamber deposition Sir Stephen Procter alluded to the troupe performing in Protestant as well as Catholic households. He described how the troupe adapted the *St Christopher* play for performance in Protestant and Catholic households respectively:

when they plaide the said play at any protestantes house they could play the said Play, & would leaue out all that parte of the said Acte which concerned the Counterfeiteinge of the said Disputacon [...], And would & could neuerthelesse when they played the said play before any popishe people where the Owners of the house were popishlie affected, play & acte the same with the said Popishe Preiste and Englishe Minister '(PRO STAC 8 19/ 10, mb. 18).

The Company's Repertory

From the Star Chamber case [PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10] we know the names of four of the plays in the troupe's repertoire: *St Christopher*, *The Three Shirleys*, *Pericles* and *King Lear*. While *St Christopher* was 'a version of an old morality play', *Pericles*, *Lear* and *The Three Shirleys* were plays derived from the fashionable world of the London playhouses.¹¹⁵ In each case, the company appear to have been working from printed texts. In his deposition about the *St Christopher* performance, Richard Simpson alluded to 'that booke by which this deponent, and the other persons, did act the said play', and stated that the *St Christopher* performed at Sir John Yorke's house was the same 'as was acted before in other places And prynted in the said Boke' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 29). William Harrison, likewise, deposed that 'the plaies which they so plaid' at Gowthwaite 'were vsuall playes And such as were acted in

¹¹⁴ Boddy, p. 110.

¹¹⁵ *Lear* and *Pericles* had been written for the King's Men at the Globe, being printed as quartos in 1608 and 1609, respectively. *The Three Shirleys* (otherwise known as *The Travels of the Three English Brothers*) was published in 1607, having been acted by Queen Anne's Men. [Harbage, pp. 96-7.] The play (apparently written by Day, Rowley, and Wilkins) was based 'on the real life adventures and travels of Sir Thomas Sir Anthony and Sir Robert Shirley. The latter had been the English ambassador to the Shah of Persia. One of the Shirleys in the play fell in love with and married a beautiful woman from the East'. [Boddy, p. 107.] A prose account of the brothers' adventures by Anthony Nixon (*The Three English Brothers*) was also published in 1607. [Sir E. Denison, 'Discours of the Turkes. By Sir Thomas Sherley (1606-7)', *Camden Miscellany*, 16 (London: Camden Society, 1936), p. v.] There is no other known reference to *St Christopher* and the play text is no longer extant.

Comon and publick places and staiges And there was no addition' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 30).

It is likely that their repertoire of plays was larger than these four works, including other religious dramas and, perhaps, other printed plays. Sir Stephen Procter's allusion to the company's 'ridiculous playes and interludes' suggests that the troupe did own numerous plays (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 18); and Sir Thomas Hoby implied that the company's repertory included a larger number of religious dramas, referring to their performance of 'popish *plaies*' [own emphasis] (PRO, STAC 8 12 / 11, mb. 2).¹¹⁶

The predominance of printed plays in the company's known repertory is striking suggesting that the company were keen to perform plays fashionable in the playhouses. If representative of their wider repertory, this selection of plays also indicates that the troupe endeavoured to provide audiences with generically varied dramatic fare, offering 'tragedy, tragi-comedy, morality and knockabout satire'.¹¹⁷ Meanwhile, Procter's account of the troupe's two versions of *St Christopher* (for Protestant and Catholic audiences) suggests that the players were versatile and opportunistic in their use of play books: they were prepared to adapt them for the tastes of their different audiences.

iv-The Host at Gowthwaite: Sir John Yorke

At the time of the *St Christopher* and Shakespeare performances, Sir John Yorke was living at Gowthwaite Hall, a house located 'near Ramsgill at the top end of Nidderdale'.¹¹⁸ Yorke's family was not among the most important Yorkshire clans, although some of his predecessors were figures of repute (e.g. 'his grandfather, another Sir John, was an original member of the Russia and Africa Companies, a most successful speculator in monastic lands, and both Master of the Mint and Sheriff of London').¹¹⁹ Knighted in 1589, Sir John was only active in local government, holding office as a Justice of the Peace for a time. (Locally, he was

¹¹⁶ Sir Stephen Procter imagined the troupe to possess a number of playbooks. After the Gowthwaite *St Christopher* performance he sent out warrants for the arrest of the Simpsons and 'for searchinge for & bringinge before' him 'of all such play bockes as could or might be founde in their possessions' (PRO, STAC 8 19/ 10, mb. 19). The players and their books remained at liberty, however: 'this deponents troubles fallinge vpon him, not longe after, the said Simpsons were not [...] apprehended as otherwise he hoped and mean[t] to haue done' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 19).

¹¹⁷ Boddy, p. 107.

¹¹⁸ Christopher Howard, *Sir John Yorke of Nidderdale, 1568-1634* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1939), p.10.

¹¹⁹ Howard, pp. 10-11.

probably better known as a landlord and for his important role in the leadmining industry.) Sir John's Catholic sympathies were possibly one of the reasons why he chose to live relatively 'obscurely on [the family's] Yorkshire estates' and kept a low profile in local government.¹²⁰ He was not himself consistently recusant but one of those people referred to as Church Papists: 'He did not receive communion, attended service as infrequently as prudence permitted and in the eyes of his Protestant neighbours "did so goe to the chirche for savinge of his goodes".'¹²¹ He was affiliated to known Catholic sympathisers as well: he was married to 'Julyan Hansby, co-heiress to an estate at Bewerly in Nidderdale, and member of a family which was almost certainly Catholic'.¹²²

The protection he extended to Catholic friends and tenants on several occasions provides more positive evidence of his sympathy for the old faith. When the minister of Yorke's parish, Middlesmore, was commissioned to collect the names of popishly affected parishioners, following the statute of 1606 'imposing an oath of allegiance on all whose religious obedience was doubtful', the minister was 'persuaded to "first carry, and shewe the same to the said Sir John Yorke, and especially to the Lady Yorke". Sir John "taking pen and ink, did raise out of the said Mynisters bill, so to be presented, such names of his owne servants and frends as he thought good of. And then gave him the bill again, and thanked him"'.¹²³

Similarly, the Yorkes were reputed to have offered shelter to numerous priests at Gowthwaite Hall and to have adapted their house to include apartments for their concealment (e.g. when the house was searched in 1611, the investigators found, at the top of the house 'a garret with a makeshift fireplace and, instead of a chimney, which would have been visible from the outside, a hole in the roof to give vent to the smoke').¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Howard, p. 11.

¹²¹ Howard, pp. 11-2.

Elizabeth Stubbs, the wife of William Stubbs, the puritan minister of neighbouring Pateley Bridge, noted in her Star Chamber deposition that Sir John was a church-goer, although his wife was not: 'this Examinant saith that she thinketh Sir john yorke hath vsuallie & orderlie repaired to the Church on Saboath & other holie daies, but for the Ladie yorke she is a Recusant' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 9).

¹²² Howard, p. 11.

His brothers were also recusants; and his father and mother were known for their Catholic sympathies.

¹²³ Howard, pp. 16-7.

¹²⁴ Howard, pp. 32-3.

It was such behaviour and his generally perceived sympathy for Catholicism which antagonised local puritan justice, Sir Stephen Procter, the two engaging in a series of legal conflicts, including the Star Chamber case following the performance of *St Christopher*. In this instance, Procter not only accused Yorke of having tolerated the performance of a seditious play by an itinerant troupe, but of involvement in the Gunpowder Plot and 'of harbouring numerous seminary priests, and in particular John Gerard, the Jesuit'. The latter charges were of far greater significance initially. Yorke's hosting of the seditious Simpson production only became the key accusation when the discrediting of Procter's evidence forced the prosecution to abandon the other charges.¹²⁵

The provocative *St Christopher* performance (and the depositions mentioning other performances at the Hall) indicate that Sir John had a taste for drama, like many contemporary nobles.¹²⁶ It was a taste apparently unabated by the troubles following the 1609-10 productions at the hall. In 1628 Yorke was once more implicated in the performance of a seditious anti-Protestant drama. In this instance, Yorkshire man, Christopher Mallory was accused in the Star Chamber of having played 'the deueles part', and of having carried 'kinge Iames to a subposed hell vpon his back, alledging that all protestantes were dampened (damned)' in a play at Sir John Yorke's house in Yorkshire.¹²⁷

v- Gowthwaite Hall, Nidderdale

The hall no longer exists, its location remembered only in the 'title of Gowthwaite Reservoir, which now occupies a large part' of Nidderdale.¹²⁸ Originally a medieval monastic farm, Gowthwaite came into the hands of the Yorke family in the late fifteenth century, having been rented or purchased by an earlier Sir John. Anne Ashley Cooper describes the location and nature of the medieval house:

The old farmhouse stood in a peaceful and secluded part of the dale beside Burn Gill. the sides of the valley were deeply cut by narrow wooded gills, and in some places

¹²⁵ Howard, p. 27.

¹²⁶ The named play performances were not the only ones to be hosted at the Hall in the early seventeenth century. When George Newbalde testified for the Star Chamber case against Yorke he described how he had tried to to see the *St Christopher* performance, and reported that 'he hath hard that there hath beene many playes played at the said house' (PRO, STAC 8 19/ 10, mb. 15).

¹²⁷ London, Public Record Office, State Papers 16/ 117, fol. 48v.

¹²⁸ Howard, p. vi.

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they rose in precipitous slopes of bare rock. A small beck ran down on the north side of the dwelling and into the lake below.¹²⁹

The house was an oblong two floor building of grey stone roofed in slate, facing south, with an entrance near the south-east corner.

When Sir John inherited the Hall (on the death of his father) in 1589 it had been little changed.¹³⁰ However, as Cooper records, he and his wife Juliana 'set about making improvements to the old house' (possibly inspired by a desire to compete with the new houses built by many other nobles in the period) (e.g. the hall in which the Simpsons were to perform appears to have been recently renovated, the mason, Robert Joye reporting that he had worked in the hall in 1605). They also appear to have 'added [...] fireplaces, chimneys and chimney stacks, elaborate carved oak screens and banisters. They may even have put in wainscoting or panelling, tapestries and a plaster ceiling [while] extra glazed and mullioned windows gave more light to the great chamber and to the other rooms.'¹³¹

Gowthwaite House appears to have been fairly typical of medieval Yorkshire manor houses in size and configuration, with its essentially rectangular plan and its two floors (see plate 39). Like similar manor houses, Gowthwaite Hall incorporated sleeping chambers, kitchen facilities and a hall. Reference is also made to a great chamber (probably located on the upper floor). Surviving plans of the house (made in 1899) do not make clear whether the Jacobean 'hall' was on the first floor or the ground floor; and, as Anne Ashley Cooper notes, a space of approximately the same size existed upstairs and downstairs (see plate 40). The large ground-floor chamber (shown on the right in the 1899 plans) and the great chamber on the first-floor both measured approximately 30 feet by 14 feet.¹³² However, as Robert Joye, the mason who worked in the hall (c. 1605) described going into the buttery from the hall it is perhaps more likely that it was a ground-floor hall. A buttery would not usually be found on an upper floor. [Joye described how on one occasion Marmaduke Lupton, a household official, commanded him 'to departe foorth of the hall presentlie, & to take his tooles & Implemantes with him

¹²⁹ Anne Ashley Cooper, *Yorke Country* (Hexton: Anne Ashley Cooper, 1988), pp. 39-40.

¹³⁰ The Hall's first owner may have 'altered and enlarged the house somewhat', but no substantial change appears to have been made. Later owners made similarly limited changes. [Cooper, p. 40.]

¹³¹ Cooper, p. 81.

¹³² Information kindly provided by Anne Ashley Cooper (a direct descendant of Sir John Yorke) in a private communication (1 January, 1999). Copies of the 1899 plans of the hall (as measured by Bland & Bowes of Harrogate) were kindly prepared and provided by Mrs Ashley Cooper. The details of the dimensions of the hall were also supplied by Mrs Ashley Cooper in a private communication (11 the September, 1999).

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vnto an other roome, this *Examinant* takinge vpp the stone he was workeinge of, & Lupton then his Tooles after him into the buttrie whereat this *Examinant* much wondred, not haueinge beene soe vsed at any time before, did a litle open the Buttrie doore, & looked foorth, [...] [and] Espyed the said Marmaduke Lupton [...] bringinge in a stranger thither, which stranger the Ladie yorke did meete in the hall' (PRO, STAC 8 19/ 10, mb. 7).]

The Performance of *St Christopher* at Gowthwaite Hall, 1609-10

The Arrival of the Company

On arriving at Gowthwaite Hall the company were met by Roger Harbergeon, Yorke's bailiff. Their subsequent audience with Sir John Yorke was described by Thomas Pant in his Star Chamber deposition:

the players presentinge themselues before Sir John yorke, he asked them what plaies they had, they told him the thre shirleyes, & St. Christofer, wherevpon he willed them to play St. Christofer (PRO STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 6).

The Play

The *St Christopher* play chosen by Yorke and acted by the company does not survive. However, as the accounts of the witnesses reveal, it was a moralistic religious drama. From the testimony of the audience and actors we know that the play included at least seven or eight characters: Hermit/ Priest, Raphabus (or Reprobis), Lucifer or the Devil, two or three devils, Raphabus' servant, and an Angel.¹³³ We also know which actors assumed some of the roles. The leading company members took two of the key roles, Christopher Simpson playing Raphabus, and Robert Simpson, Lucifer. Pant deposed that he took the 'partes of the Angell & one of the Diuells' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 6), and William Harrison, the company clown, apparently played the part of Raphabus' servant. As Pant's testimony reveals, the company employed doubling, as did most patronised professional playing companies. The play was presumably cast and rehearsed in advance. As the leading members of the troupe, Robert and Christopher Simpson may have been responsible for organising these preparations.¹³⁴

¹³³ The inserted interlude included a Minister as well (possibly played by Raphabus' player).

¹³⁴ Some intriguing fragments of the play's dialogue are also preserved in the depositions of eye-witnesses. In his account of the play Thomas Pant recalls the words spoken by Raphabus to the Hermit at the end of their first meeting: 'Raphabus answered & said the Diuell was the mightiest man vpon the earth and him would he ser<.>' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 6). In a description of the play as it was performed at the house of Mr Bowes in Ellerbeck, William Browne recalled one of the Hermit's lines: 'as soone as the Diuell sawe the crosse he fled backe, & then quoth the Hermitt you may see what vertue there is in this Crosse' [own emphasis] (PRO, STAC 8

The Performance Space

From the testimony of various witnesses we know that *St Christopher* was performed in the hall of the house and that a stage was set up for the performance. For instance, Margaret Gill observed that ‘the hall of the said house was then full of people’ for the play (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 10), and Thomas Pant described how at one point in the performance several characters appeared ‘all of them of the stage together’ (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 6).¹³⁵ The stage need not have been large and could have been set at either end of the hall. As the audience is likely to have entered from the lower (buttery) end it is, however, perhaps more likely that they placed the platform at the upper end.

As the performance was staged in the evening the hall was probably lit with candles and torches. Entry to the hall was controlled by Roger Harbergeon. As George Newbalde, one would-be spectator, reported, ‘the said habbegeon [...] kept the doores’ (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 15). However, Sir John himself appears to have been involved in monitoring entry to the performance periodically. Newbalde described how,

being put back once or twice by one habbegeon, the said Sir John yorke coming to the doore, asked [him] [...] where he dwelt, and [he] [...] answering [...] he was Sir Stephen Procters man, the said Sir John said that there were some frendes then to come to see the play, And when they were come if there were Roome he should come in’ (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 15).

How the audience were accommodated is not specified, although Margaret Gill’s deposition suggests that the audience mainly stood to watch the performance. She alluded to the ‘standers by’ (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 10). As the hall at Gowthwaite was not especially large, the room may have been cleared of furniture for the performance, a few seats perhaps being reserved for Yorke, his family and his special guests.

19 / 10, mb. 12). Another witness reported that the Clown mocked the Minister when he was overcome in the dispute with the Priest and ‘said well thou must away anon’ [own emphasis] (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 12).

¹³⁵ The company may have been accustomed to performing upon a stage and may even have carried their own temporary platform with them on tour. Confirmation that the troupe performed on stages could be found in the remarks of Sir Thomas Hoby. When he condemned the troupe in his case against Sir Richard Cholmley (1609) he repeatedly spoke of the company as ‘stage players’ (PRO, STAC 8 12 / 11). While he may have been using the phrase simply as a synonym for ‘actors’, it is possible that it reflects the actual performance practice of the troupe.

Playing Gear

The accounts of the troupe's performance indicate that they usually performed in costume and made use of props and stage furniture, like licensed playing troupes of the period. For instance, we learn from Thomas Pant's deposition that Raphabus appeared as 'a wilde man apparrelled all in greene, with a green [...] Garland about his head' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 6). Margaret Gill echoes this description, referring to Raphabus 'clad in greene' with 'all yvie about his head' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 10).

The Hermit (who appears to have assumed the Priest's role in the added interlude) wore 'a black gowne' which one witness described as being 'like vnto a preist', with 'a highe coller' and a 'Cornerd Capp' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb.s 10-11). The Minister also wore a black costume, William Browne describing the Minister as wearing 'a black Cloke' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 12). Meanwhile, the Angel, played by Pant, appeared 'in whyte', in keeping with traditional representations of angels (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 12).

The costuming of Lucifer and the other devils is not described in detail, but in William Benson's deposition he provides a clue to their nature. He reported that he did 'in the said play see three strange fellowes in painted Coates' lift up another character to take him off-stage (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 15), the context suggesting that the characters were the play's devils. In what way the costumes were strange is not clear, but they were perhaps painted like the costumes used for devils or damned souls in Medieval plays (e.g. the costumes may have been painted 'with flames of fire').¹³⁶ The costumes used for the play's other characters may have been painted as well.¹³⁷

Few props appear to have been used or required for *St Christopher*, but those employed are striking, including 'a great yallowe coloured Crosse', 'a chaine of Iron', and a book like a Bible (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb.s 18, 15). As the cross is also described as wooden, it was presumably painted to look yellow (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 11). The company may have made it specially for the productions of the play. The chain of iron was probably real and

¹³⁶ Painted 'flames of fire' are called for upon the costume of Judas when he comes in 'as a damned soule' in the Tudor interlude, *All for Money*. [T. W. Craik, *The Tudor Interlude*, 3rd edn (Leicester: Leicester University, 1958; repr. 1967), p. 52.]

¹³⁷ Painted material was often used for costumes in other varieties of amateur early modern drama (e.g. in 1574-5 at Chester the Coopers' preparations for the Whitsun plays included paying 'for the payntinge the playars clothes', and the St John's College, Cambridge 1556-7 inventory of costumes included 'a side cote of white painted clothes lyned with white cotton'). [REED: *Chester*, ed. by Lawrence M. Clopper (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto; London: Manchester University, 1979), p. 108. Nelson, REED: *Cambridge*, I, p. 196.]

may have been borrowed or commissioned from a local smith. Meanwhile Procter's description of the prop Bible as being like a copy of the Scriptures suggests that an ordinary book was used as a substitute Bible. This may also have been borrowed, possibly on-site from the Yorkes.

The Audience

The audience for the performance was large and socially mixed, including not only members of the household and family, but friends of the family and uninvited neighbours of lower ranks, as Pant indicated.¹³⁸ When questioned about the audience, he recorded that 'Sir John yorke & his Ladie were there, & to the number of some fowerscore or a hundreth persons moe of his neighbours & freinds whose names he knoweth not' (PRO, STAC 8 19/ 10, mb. 6). The crowd assembled for the performance was so large that it was necessary to turn some prospective spectators (such as George Newbalde) away, and, according to Sir Stephen Procter, one local woman was injured in the press of people wishing to enter to the performance.¹³⁹ William Browne, a linen weaver in the audience, identified some of the spectators more specifically:

he saith he knoweth that Sir John yorke, & his said Ladie Christofer Johnson Humphrey Baynes Thomas ffenton katheryne ffranke & Margarett Allmond wereat the said play, & thinketh that Thomas yorke William yorke Richard yorke John yorke William Horner Thomas Eyre & ffrancis Grainge were at the said play likewise (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 12).

The list includes Yorke's relations and perhaps some of the family friends whom Sir John told George Newbalde he expected at the play (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 15).

The Staging of the Play

A number of the play's spectators describe the performance of *St Christopher*, but probably the most detailed account of its staging is that afforded by company member, Thomas Pant (although it does not include a description of the inserted disputation). I give his description in full. (Parts of the manuscript are lost or damaged, as is indicated by the use of <.>.)

¹³⁸ The uninvited neighbours in the audience included servants from other households such as Margaret Gill, husbandmen like William Benson, and artisans such as William Browne, a linen weaver.

¹³⁹ He alluded to 'one [...] younge woman whoe gott some hurte in attemptinge to gett in, to whome as Newbald (told this deponent) the said Sir John yorke gaue some money' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 19).

he saith there was one Raphabus a wilde man apparrelled all in greene, with a greene hy<.> (ivy) Garland about his head that neither feared God nor the Diuell, nor was of any religion, but would serue th<.> mightiest man vpon the earth, & haueinge serued two kinges & an Emperour, & hearinge the Diuell was of mo<.> (more) might then they were, lefte them, & betooke himselfe to the Diuell his seruice, And afterwarde the said Raphabus beinge alone, a hermitt came in, & entered into Conference with him, to drawe him from the said Duie<.> whom Raphabus answered & said the Diuell was the mightiest man vpon earth, & him would he ser<.> (serve) vpon the hermitt lefte him for that time, & the Duiells came to him againe to accompanie him, [w]<.> all of them of the stage together, & Imediatelie therevpon the hermitt entered attyred with a gown <.> Cornerd Capp on his head, & a Crosse of wood on his shoulder, & sett downe the Crosse iust i<.> where the Diuells & Raphabus were to come, & the Duiell named Lucifer and Raphabus comm<.> & espyeing the Crosse the Diuell started & shrunke backe, & willed Raphabus to take the le<.> (left?) path, wherevpon Raphabus askeinge him what he feared, Lucifer answered he feared not the wood<.> Crosse, but the Adored Jewe therevpon executed *which* was his enemye: Wherevpon Raphabus lefte the <.> (Devil?) sayinge there was a mightier man then he was, & went to the crosse, & soe the Duiells went all [...] away casteinge fire about them, And then came the Hermitt in & Conferred with him againe, & inioyn<.> him a Pennance for his former sinns [...] Allsoe this *Examinant* saith that after the conversion of the said Raphabus the Angell cam<.> vnto him, & called him by the name of Christofer: And further saith that the foole menconed in this *Interrogative* was the seruant to Raphabus, who in jeasteinge manner made sporte to the people (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 6).

In this answer Pant does not describe the interlude inserted into the play's Gowthwaite performance, denying that 'there was there then personated or acted any Englishe Minister, popishe preist, or any disputacon' (PRO, STAC 8 19/ 10, mb. 6). However, he affords a fascinating insight into the remainder of the performance and its staging.

Pant's account suggests that the play performance may have begun with the entry of Raphabus as a 'wilde' man and his bold assertion that he 'neither feared God nor the Diuell' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 6). It would have made a dramatic opening. His blasphemous

declaration that he intended to serve the Devil was probably equally striking. The speech might have been particularly shocking, if addressed directly to the audience by Christopher Simpson. Such a style of delivery might have reminded spectators of characters such as the Vices of Medieval Morality plays.

Having declared his intention of serving the Devil, Raphabus may have left the stage, as Pant implies that there followed some action which he does not report. He describes the next scene as occurring 'afterwards' Raphabus 'beinge alone' (PRO, STAC 8 19/ 10, mb. 6). This may mean that there were other characters present during the play's opening to whom Simpson addressed his beligerent speeches; or that other scenes occurred in between the opening and the meeting with the hermit which Pant proceeds to describe. The intervening action could have included a first meeting between Raphabus and Lucifer (and his devils) as Pant, speaking of the later meeting between the pair, talks of the 'Duiells' coming to him again to accompanie him' [own emphasis] (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 6). The opening scenes may also have included comic business involving William Harrison, the clown (or fool), as Raphabus' servant.

How the hermit was attired on his first entrance is not described. As a person living away from the world and its cares, the troupe may have chosen to dress him poorly and simply, which could have made his later transformed appearance in Priest-like dress even more striking. We know from Pant's account that Raphabus at this point stubbornly refuses to heed the arguments of the hermit, continuing to make the blasphemous assertion that 'the Diuell was the mightiest man vpon the earth'. The dramatic tension was probably increased as the debate between them continued, and the spectators became anxious to discover whether the hermit would be successful in his attempt to save Raphabus from his error.

In the next scene of Pant's account, the hermit reappears in his Priest's attire (wearing the black high-collared gown and cornered cap described by the spectators), and carrying the wooden cross, mentioned in several depositions. It would have made a visually striking scene. It might have been rendered even more powerful if the Simpsons borrowed at this moment from Medieval staging traditions, the hermit entering stage-right, the traditional location of heaven, while the devils and Raphabus stood stage-left, the sinister side, and customary location of hell (or the hell mouth incorporated in some Medieval dramas). The use of such symbolic staging would have reinforced the contrast between Lucifer and his devils, and the hermit / Priest, as representative of godliness and truth. The fact that the

hermit is not seen immediately and Pant's description of the cross being set 'iust [...] where the Diuells & Raphabus were to come' implies that the characters were meant to be far apart on the stage (PRO, STAC 8 19/ 10, mb. 6). In carrying the cross upon his shoulder, the hermit would also have invited comparison with Christ, the original saviour of fallen or reprobate man, rendering the hermit a more awesome figure and adding to the dramatic tension of the scene.

Pant's description of Robert Simpson's performance as Lucifer and his reaction to the cross is detailed and indicates that Simpson's personification of fear was convincing: 'espyeing the Crosse the Diuell started & shrunke back, & willed Raphabus to take the [le <.>] path' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 6). Evidently, Simpson manifested Lucifer's fear bodily, stopping and physically recoiling from the cross. The precise meaning of the devil's willing Raphabus to take a particular path is obscured by the damage to the manuscript before the word 'path'. The damaged word may be 'left'. Whatever the word, the context suggests that the Devil wanted to keep Raphabus between himself and the cross. The company's audience would have been afforded a vivid demonstration of the Devil's traditional weakness before the power of God and his Son.¹⁴⁰ At this point, Raphabus and the Devil implicitly remained at some distance from the hermit and the cross, perhaps standing centre-stage, while the hermit/priest stood stage-right. Spurning the Devil for his weakness, Christopher Simpson is described as having gone 'to the crosse'.

Raphabus' renunciation of Lucifer would have been a dramatic moment in itself, but the pyrotechnic display with which the devils left the stage must have made the scene especially memorable for the Gowthwaite audience. Pant describes how they left 'casteing fire about them' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 6). He does not explain how this special effect was achieved, but it is likely that the troupe used gunpowder or fireworks. In the confined space of the fully-packed hall this display might have been particularly thrilling.

According to Pant, the hermit returned to the stage after this departure and talked with Raphabus, recommending a penance for his sins, as a prologue to his conversion and re-christening as Christopher by the angel (played by Pant). The manner of his entry as the Angel is not described by Pant but is unlikely to have been elaborate. There is nothing to suggest that he was lowered onto the stage from above using stage machinery. It is more

¹⁴⁰ In fearing an inanimate object, Lucifer's behaviour has a comic dimension which the troupe might have exploited as another way of discrediting him.

likely that he walked onto the stage, his costume identifying him as an angel. (As well as wearing white, he may have worn a wig of golden hair, in keeping with contemporary iconographical conventions.) With Raphabus' conversion the action of the play was complete and the performance appears to have finished at this point.

The overview thus afforded may offer an essentially accurate account of the play as performed at Protestant houses, but, as already noted, Pant's deposition does not provide a full account of the controversial Gowthwaite production because it omits any description of the inserted interlude. To reconstruct the staging of this part of the performance we can turn to the accounts of other witnesses.

Although most of the witnesses confirm that the additional interlude featuring the debate between the Minister and Priest was included, it is not entirely clear where in the play's action it was inserted, or to what extent the play as a whole was adapted. According to Milner, William Browne's account of another production of the adapted play at Mr Bowes' house in Ellerbeck, the dispute occurred prior to Raphabus' renunciation of the devil. (Browne also suggests that Raphabus may have assumed the part of the Minister): ¹⁴¹

one with a Cornerd Capp a highe coller & gowne like vnto a preist named by the name of an h<.> came in beareinge a Woodden Crosse on his shoulder, & an other that was termed Raphabus a <.> in blacke they two had some disputacon concerninge Religion [...] And a while after one like a Duiell came into them & as soone as the Duiell sawe the crosse he fled backe, and then quoth the Hermitt you may see what vertue there is in this Crosse' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb.s 11-2). ¹⁴²

The 'disputacon [...] toucheinge matters of religion' is not itself described in detail by any of the eyewitnesses; but at least one part of the debate is reported upon more fully in Sir Stephen Procter's deposition. As Procter was not present at the performance and was therefore basing his account upon the reports which he had received, his description may not

¹⁴¹ Browne deposed that he 'did see the said *Christofer Simpson* & *Robert Simpson* with others play a play at Ellerbecke at one Mr. Bowes his house in the hall there on Ashewednesday last [...] which was called by the name of St Christofe<.>' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 11).

¹⁴² Browne does not describe a dispute occurring between the hermit and Raphabus. This may mean that the religious disputation between the Priest and Minister in the Catholic version of the play was simply an adaptation of the debate between the hermit and Raphabus. As the hermit doubled as the Priest and Raphabus may have doubled as the Minister, the likelihood that this was the case is even greater.

be wholly reliable. However, if accurate, his account affords a fascinating insight into the company's possible use of symbolic props. He deposed that during the 'Counterfeite Disputacon' one of the players carried 'in his armes a great yallowe coloured Crosse [...] & the Englishe Minister had vnder his arme or in his hand a booke like a bib<.> (bible) being asked what he could say, or how he could defend his Religion, [...] he answered by this booke, & then offering to shewe it foor[th] it was reiecte<.>' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 18). Implicitly, the cross and the Bible were being used as emblems of the rival religions, the Catholic church being recognised as the Church of icons (such as the Cross), and the Protestant church as the Church of the Bible and the Word.¹⁴³ The effectiveness of the symbolism is revealed by the deposition of William Browne, a milner, who was in the audience. He explained how, during the disputation 'he could not well vnderstand their talke, yet by the shewe of the Crosse' he knew that the actor in the black high collared gown was 'for the Popishe religion against this religion' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb.s 11-2).¹⁴⁴

As a contest, the debate between the Priest and Minister afforded a way of generating dramatic tension, while the scene's provocative and, indeed, illegal content offered the troupe's audiences at venues such as Gowthwaite Hall, a potential frisson. The comic treatment of the Minister in the scene may have rendered it especially entertaining for the Catholic spectators in the audience. While William Harrison, the company member who played the clown claimed that 'he did not vse any mocking or flouting of any english mynyster', one of the spectators (William Browne, a weaver from Golthouse) reported that when the Minister was overcome in the debate, 'the foole did Clapp the englishe minister on the shoulder and mocked or flouted him, & said well thou must away anon' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 12).¹⁴⁵ That the comedy of the moment was enjoyed finds confirmation in Sir Stephen Procter's deposition. According to his account, when the Devil carried 'the English minister away' the audience 'greatlie laughed & reioyced a longe time together' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 18).¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ The Protestant church encouraged individual Bible study and placed great emphasis upon the primacy of the Word. At the same time it rejected the icon worship associated with the Catholic church and its rituals.

¹⁴⁴ Not all the spectators decoded the symbolism employed in the interlude as readily. Margaret Gill appears to have relied upon the explication of her fellow spectators: 'th<.> disputacon as the standers by told [...] [her] was of the old Lawe and th<.> <.> and as they sayd thone of them was an Englishe minister and thother a popishe p<.> (priest)' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 10).

¹⁴⁵ Sir Stephen Procter also reported that 'he that plaide the foole did deryde' and devise 'ridiculous Jeastes against him that plaide the Englishe minister' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 18).

¹⁴⁶ William Browne of Golthouse echoed this point, stating that 'when the Englishe Minister was taken away, the people went after, makeinge a Meryment & a sporte at it' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 12).

The carrying away of the Minister after his defeat is mentioned in several depositions. William Browne of Golthouse deposed that ‘afterwards the Duiells came & fetchte him away, one of them takeinge him by the arme, & carried him away on his shoulder’ (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10 mb. 12). Another William Browne’s deposition provides further evidence suggesting that Raphabus assumed the Minister’s part in the interlude, the devils seizing upon Raphabus in his account: ‘as the Duiell sawe the crosse he fled backe, & then quoth the Hermitt you may see what vertue there is in this crosse, & afterwards the other like duiells came, & they did all lay hold vpon Raphabus & cast him downe & pulled his Clothes in peices’ (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 12). Assuming that the Minister and Raphabus were the same figure in the inserted interlude, William Benson’s deposition suggests that the Minister was also chained briefly by the devils: ‘he saith he did in the said play see three strange fellowes in painted Coates havinge a Chaine of Iron about them click vpp another man and hold him aloft and letting him downe againe pulled of his Coat’ (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 15).

According to Sir Stephen Procter’s deposition, the pyrotechnic display accompanying the Devil’s departure from the stage (after his rejection by Raphabus) in the standard version of the play, was preserved in the adapted Catholic version, the Minister being carried off-stage ‘after some flasheinges of fire’ (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 18).

In keeping with the title of the play, and the standard production described by Pant, the Gowthwaite performance should have concluded with a penitent Raphabus being converted and re-christened as Christopher. (If Christopher Simpson was carried off-stage as the Minister, he must therefore have returned as Raphabus, to perform his penance and meet Pant’s angel.) There is no reason to think that this did not occur. As in the professional theatres, the conclusion of the performance might have been marked with the sounding of a trumpet, or with music.

The Audience’s Response and the Aftermath of the Production

The play performance had attracted a large audience and, according to Thomas Pant, *St Christopher* ‘was well lyked, of all that were then present’ (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 6). News of the performance and the controversial interlude was viewed less favourably by local puritans such as William Stubbs, the Minister at Pateley Bridge and officials such as Sir Stephen Procter. Procter was loudest of the critics, claiming that the performance had had a pernicious effect upon its audience, encouraging them to treat the established Church with

disrespect and to spread blasphemous views: ‘some of the said Popishe people, whoe said they had seene the said play acted at the said Sir John yorkes house in Netherdale, affirmed to some other of ther neighbours who had not seene the same, that if they had seene the said Play as it was plaid at Gowlthwaite, they would neuer care for the new l<.>we (law) or for goinge to the Church more’ (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 18). This may not have been entirely factual. Procter was not a disinterested observer, as already noted. Nonetheless, it is an intriguing testimony to drama’s percieved capacity to influence spectators and to act as a vehicle for subversive propaganda.

Procter initiated a Star Chamber suit against the Yorkes after the *St Christopher* production and issued warrants for the arrest of the Simpson company players. The troupe was not apprehended, however, and the actors were never punished specifically for performing their controversial *St Christopher* play at Gowthwaite Hall, although members of the troupe were arrested and fined as unlicensed actors in 1612 and 1615-6.¹⁴⁷

The burden of punishment for the Gowthwaite performance fell upon the Yorkes, who were the main defendants in the Star Chamber case, launched by Procter. Procter accused Yorke and his family of much more than hosting and condoning the blasphemous play production, however, as noted above (p. 227). He alleged that Yorke had also been involved in the Gunpowder Plot and had sheltered ‘numerous seminary priests, and in particular John Gerard, the Jesuit- an act which was of itself treason and sufficient to warrant the death sentence.’¹⁴⁸ As a result Yorke was arrested and committed to the Fleet prison in 1611. He was not released on bail until October 31st, 1613.¹⁴⁹ The charges of treason were later dropped, after the trial of Sir Stephen Procter discredited much of the evidence which he had collected against Yorke and his family. (Procter faced allegations of corruption. He was accused of ‘receiving bribes, and of seizing the persons of thousands of people and then illegally despoiling them of money and goods.’ A bill against him ‘was moved in the House [of Commons].’) ¹⁵⁰ Yorke and his wife therefore eventually stood trial,

on the score simply of permitting the Simpson players to present an interlude, by which the established religion was brought into derision. It was held by the Court that Sir John was not aware of the scandallous nature of the interlude before it was

¹⁴⁷ Boddy, p. 108, p. 110.

¹⁴⁸ Howard, p. 27.

¹⁴⁹ Howard, p. 28.

¹⁵⁰ Howard, p. 56.

presented, and his fault lay in the fact that he did not rebuke or arrest the players, but applauded their efforts, deriding the English Minister and permitting the rest of the audience to do the same. The mere bringing of religion onto the stage being held to be libel, he was accordingly fined £ 1,000, his wife a similar sum, his three brothers £500 each and other defendants miscellaneous sums amounting to £300.¹⁵¹

The Yorkes were not prompt in settling their fines, however, despite the imprisonment of Richard Yorke as a surety for their payment. As Howard reports, 'no payment was made for nearly three years. Sir John and his wife were therefore once more committed to the Fleet.' Yorke was not released until February 14th, 1617 when he had conformed as well to the established church 'and taken the oath of allegiance.'¹⁵² The original fines upon the family were subsequently reduced to two fines (of a £1000 and £200). 'The first sum was probably in respect of Sir John and his wife, and the second in respect of his relations and servants, but both paid by Sir John himself.'¹⁵³

As noted above, Sir John was not discouraged, however, from hosting further play performances, including topical dramas, allegedly hosting a play in 1628 in which King James was carried to hell on the Devil's back.¹⁵⁴ One wonders whether the play performed was a revised and adapted version of the earlier controversial Catholic version of *St Christopher*, King James being substituted for the Minister. No further information about the performance is available to clarify this point.¹⁵⁵

Some Conclusions

As the events at Gowthwaite Hall reveal, noble patrons and their country houses could play a significant role in provincial dramatic culture. Indeed, in counties such as Yorkshire, where the population was small and dispersed, country houses like Gowthwaite Hall afforded valuable cultural centres, where people could occasionally converge and enjoy shared recreation and cultural stimulation, promoting and fostering community solidarity. (Such

¹⁵¹ Howard, pp. 44-5.

¹⁵² Howard, pp. 45-6.

¹⁵³ Howard, p. 46.

¹⁵⁴ PRO, SP 16/ 117, fol. 48v.

¹⁵⁵ Predictably, Christopher Mallory who was accused of playing the Devil's part denied any involvement in a production at Sir John Yorke's house: 'Being asked wheather ever he was at a play at Sir Iohn Yorkes house, he denieth that he was euer ther at any play, or was euer an actor in any play at all in all his life' (PRO, SP 16/ 118, fol. 22-22v).

opportunities to affirm shared values and a common culture were perhaps especially important for recusant communities, of the kind found in Jacobean Nidderdale.)

At the same time, the activities of the Simpson company provide further evidence that the theatres of London were not the only playing places in which contemporary culture was being challenged and debated through the medium of drama. Many regional English communities sustained their own dramatic culture in the early modern period; and at least some provincial acting troupes were capable of staging performances as skilful and ingenious as their licensed metropolitan peers. Likewise, the Simpsons' two versions of *St Christopher* for their Catholic and Protestant audiences demonstrate that some local troupes were, like professional London troupes, accustomed to tailoring their plays for their different audiences.

At the same time, provincial communities and players were not necessarily unaware of, or unfamiliar with, metropolitan theatrical culture. Indeed, in some regions people were introduced to the plays of professional dramatists such as Shakespeare not only by touring London players, but by local performers. Once more, if a full understanding of English Renaissance dramatic culture (and of the place of particular dramatists such as Shakespeare within that culture) is to be gained, regional productions in private as well as public venues need to be taken into account.

CHAPTER FIVE

Play Performances in Ecclesiastical buildings and their precincts

Vernacular play productions in the churches and cathedrals of early modern England have been little researched, scholarly attention focusing instead upon play performances in 'halls and inns'.¹ As John Wasson observes, many recent 'discussions of where vernacular plays were acted [...] ignore churches as even possible venues'.²

However, as contemporary evidence reveals, plays were performed in and around English cathedrals and parish churches throughout the early modern period.³ Indeed, between 1559-1625 there are explicit records of plays being performed in at least 28 provincial churches (see appendix viii).⁴ The true extent of dramatic activity in church buildings and grounds is likely to have been even greater.⁵ It was not a tradition which ended with the Jacobean reign either. A church performance by professional players is recorded as late as 1625-6 and the last recorded amateur 'church play [...] was in 1642'.⁶

Scholarly reluctance to accept that the church was a 'popular playing place' in Renaissance England may stem from 'the notion that in an age when the theater was often viewed as a

¹ Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation: Protestantism, Patronage, and Play in Tudor England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993), p. 132.

² John M. Wasson, 'The English Church as Theatrical Space', in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. by John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University, 1997), 25-37 (p. 25). In his article 'Drama in the Church' in *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, White explains in more detail how he believes church performances in post-Reformation England have been 'largely ignored, primarily because of the persistent and almost unanimous opinion that apart from the private theaters in London and a few inns, indoor performances took place almost exclusively within the multi-purpose hall: the guildhall in provincial communities, and the great hall or refectory in a noble household, academic institution, and monastery'. [Paul Whitfield White, "'Drama in the Church": Church Playing in Tudor England', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 6 (1993), 15-36 (p. 15).]

³ Plays were performed in churches in London as well as the provinces. Ian Lancashire records that players performed 'interludes in the churchyard of Christ Church, St. Katherine's Aldgate, during Easter and Whitsun weeks, and on Sundays and holy days between them, and up to Michaelmas' circa 1565. [Ian Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts and Records of Britain: A Chronological Topography to 1558* (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1984), p. 219.]

⁴ 'Sixty-five performances by professional players' are recorded in 'sixteen different churches' during the Medieval and Renaissance era (up to 1642). Wasson also observes more generally that 'we already know of 143 parish churches, and other religious houses that performed plays in the church, plus 23 other performances that moved no further than the churchyard'. [Wasson, 'The English Church', p. 25.]

⁵ Performances in churches were probably 'even more widespread' in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries 'when every town had a church but few had guildhalls and when the church was more completely the center of village life than it was after the Reformation'. [John Wasson, 'Professional Actors in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 3 (1984), 1-11 (p. 7).]

⁶ Wasson, 'The English Church', p. 35.

kind of anti-church [...] entertainments [such] as plays would have been entirely inappropriate in the official institution of religious worship'.⁷ Some contemporaries were critical of playing in church. In 1580, Anthony Munday wrote angrily about professional players being 'priuledged to roame abroad, and permitted to publish their mametree in euerie Temple of God [...] so that now the Sanctuarie is become a plaiers stage, and a den of theeves and adulterers'.⁸ However, as Munday's own account reveals, such criticism did not prevent plays from being performed in churches (though his suggestion that 'euerie Temple of God' was being used for plays is an exaggeration) and his views were not widely held. Indeed, the 'impression that in late Medieval and Renaissance England the church was deemed unsuitable by conscientious clerics and lay men for anything other than religious worship' is 'distorted and historically inaccurate'.⁹

Medieval and early modern churches were the venues for a variety of secular as well as ecclesiastical activities. The 'great central aisle of St. Paul's Cathedral was a fashionable promenade throughout the late Middle Ages and well into the Renaissance' and 'in the provinces [...], parish naves were turned into makeshift banqueting halls for church ales and memorable feasts'.¹⁰ Likewise, Protestantism was not an inherently anti-theatrical religion. Indeed, even Puritans were not necessarily opposed to drama, as Margot Heinemann has demonstrated.¹¹ The early Protestant church used drama as a tool of religious instruction and propaganda. John Foxe spoke of 'players, printers and preachers' being 'set up against the triple crown of the Pope, to bring him down'.¹² Hence, we find

⁷ Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p. 16.

⁸ Cited in Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p. 134.

⁹ Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p. 135.

¹⁰ Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p. 135.

¹¹ In *Puritanism and Theatre*, Heinemann challenges the common assumption that Puritanism and anti-theatricalism were synonymous in early modern England: 'There is, on the face of it, something oversimplified about an argument which has to ignore so many obvious cases. Milton was a passionate theatre-goer in his youth, profoundly sensuous in *Paradise Lost*, yet surely in some sense a Puritan. [...] The 3rd Earl of Pembroke, Shakespeare's patron, was considered leader of the Puritan group in James I's government, and his brother the 4th Earl, joint dedicatee of the first Folio, was a Parliamentarian in the Civil War.' [Margot Heinemann, *Puritanism and Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1980), p. 21.]

¹² Cited in Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages, 1300-1600*, 4 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959-1981), II:i (1967), p. 14.

Martin Bucer was another reformer and theologian who considered drama to be useful as a 'form of entertainment for youth, and when properly staged, a means of promoting piety and moral character in society at large'. [Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation*, pp. 101-2.]

White records how: 'From the 1530s, playwrights and players, both amateurs and professional, contributed to the formation of an emergent Protestant culture; moreover, they were patronised by reform-oriented leaders from the royal court to provincial grammar schools in an effort to win popular support for the religious and ecclesiastical policies of the Protestant Tudor administration'.

pioneering theologians such as John Bale producing Protestant plays. Even in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period when some religious reformers were critical of theatre (and play performances in churches), other Protestants were happy to watch or to be involved in dramatic productions, including those staged in and outside church buildings.¹³

A number of factors are likely to have contributed to the popularity of churches as playing venues. Ecclesiastical buildings and their grounds were an obvious venue for parish plays and other church-sponsored productions as they were a conventional place of assembly for parishioners, usually freely available and 'large enough to hold all the inhabitants'.¹⁴ Indeed, as Wasson notes, a 'more suitable acting space' would not be available in many towns.¹⁵

Their usual capacity to accommodate a town or village's community and their provision of indoor performance spaces (sometimes including seating) potentially made parish and cathedral churches equally attractive venues for professional acting companies (especially in towns where another large indoor space was unavailable).¹⁶ In some cases, players may have been able to borrow or hire playing clothes and props on-site as well, inventories of church goods revealing that a number of regional churches owned playing gear (e.g. costumes were owned by Bodmin's parish church and Worcester cathedral).¹⁷

[Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p. 213.]

¹³ The Earl of Leicester and Sir Francis Walsingham 'were noted patrons both of Puritans and players'; and the Earl's players are known to have performed in several churches. In 1560-70 they were rewarded at Dartmouth when they 'plaid at church'; and in 1574 they were paid for 'playing in the churche' at Doncaster.

Heinemann, p. 21.

REED: *Devon*, ed. by John M. Wasson (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1986), p. 66.

J. T. Murray, *English Dramatic Companies, 1558-1642*, 2 vols (London: Constable, 1910), II, p. 256.

¹⁴ Wasson, 'The English Church', p. 25.

Charges were often exacted for the use of rooms in church houses for play productions, but these were usually privately mounted performances. Parish plays or church-sponsored productions were more generally staged in or outside the church.

¹⁵ Wasson 'The English Church', p. 25.

Even when a town owned a civic hall, the hall was not always large or able to accommodate great numbers of local people. This was not necessary. Town halls were generally intended for use only by the local civic body and its officers.

¹⁶ As Wickham has noted, travelling companies show a 'marked preference throughout the whole hundred year period [1530-1630] for indoor performance.' [Wickham, II:i, p. 157.]

¹⁷ Church-owned costumes did not have to be used on-site. Individuals who hired the garments were free to use them elsewhere. Indeed, surviving records indicate that it was more usual for costumes to be hired for use in other towns or villages. The churchwardens' accounts for St Mary the Virgin, Tewkesbury include numerous records of payments received for rental of the parish 'players gere'. Most frequently, the wardrobe was 'rented to nearby villages' (e.g. in 1583-4 money was received from 'Rychard Wood and Iohn farley off Mathen for ye hyer off ye Reparall'; Mathon is a

I- The Elizabethan and Jacobean Church: Placing Church Performances in Context

Before describing the conventions observed when plays were mounted in ecclesiastical spaces and offering an account of two specific play productions, I want to place church playing in context. The following section offers, therefore, an overview of the church's importance in contemporary culture and an introductory account of church playing and its demise .

The Church in early modern England

Few churches were built in the Elizabethan period. Indeed, 'although some of the most spectacular great houses were erected during the reign of Elizabeth probably less church building was carried out in that period than at any time before the present century'.¹⁸ Consequently, most Elizabethan and Jacobean communities were served by churches or cathedrals of medieval or earlier origin.

Medieval churches were often the 'most prominent building' in their town or village, being larger and grander than the private houses of the parishioners.¹⁹ Even in the Elizabethan period when many towns built or converted houses into town halls and school houses, the church remained the largest, most impressive edifice. The guildhall at Leicester is, for instance, much smaller than the neighbouring church of St Martin's.²⁰

Likewise, medieval churches were normally built in a central or prominent location in the community. Such physical prominence was in keeping with the central role of churches in medieval communities. Not only were the lives of people framed by religious rituals (the key events of most people's lives- birth, marriage, death- were marked by religious rites), but society observed a calendar in which half the year was marked by a series of religious festivals and holy days.²¹ As public spaces, churches and their grounds were frequently

village eleven miles from Tewkesbury). [*REED: Herefordshire and Worcestershire*, ed. by David N. Klausner (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1990), p. 358.]

¹⁸ Olive Cook in *The Shell Guide to England*, ed. by John Hadfield (London: Rainbird Reference Books, 1970), p. 55.

¹⁹ John Betjeman, *Collins Guide to English Parish Churches* (London: Collins, 1958), p. 45.

²⁰ White estimates that the guildhall could 'at best [...] accommodate a hundred (mostly standing) spectators', while St Martin's 'with its exceptionally large south wing [...] could accommodate a much larger audience of, say, five hundred'. [Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p. 142.]

²¹ The ritual half of the year extended roughly from Christmas to Midsummer and 'can be considered a distinctive and extended festive season'. [Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religion and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 54.] Important celebrations in this half of the year included the twelve days of Christmas and the 'collection of moveable feasts encompassed by Shrove Tuesday and Corpus Christi'.

the venue for secular as well as ecclesiastical parish activities, further increasing their importance in parochial life (e.g. there are records of court sessions, fairs, ales and plays being staged in medieval parish and cathedral churches and their grounds).²²

The place of religion and the Church in English society was altered by the Reformation and the changes in church rituals and the liturgical calendar which it heralded.²³ The suppression of so many traditional religious celebrations and rituals left a cultural vacuum. Some communities rallied to generate a new religious culture (e.g. some towns and villages sought to replace the Catholic dramas traditionally staged to celebrate holidays such as Corpus Christi with 'Protestant plays on subjects remote from the old and dangerous themes [...] like the play of *Tobias* composed for Lincoln, or the *Julian the Apostate* played at Shrewsbury in 1565').²⁴

Nonetheless, the Church and its houses continued to play an important role in the life of Elizabethan and Jacobean communities. Indeed, religious awareness was arguably heightened, in the Reformed Church of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.²⁵ Equally, churches continued to be important in the life of provincial communities as public

[Francois Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World: Elizabethan Seasonal Entertainment and the Professional Stage*, trans. by Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993), p. 81.]

²² Anderson records how 'manorial courts' were held 'in the Staffordshire churches of Alrewas and Yoxall in unbroken sequence from the reign of Edward II down to the nineteenth century.'

[M. D. Anderson, *History and Imagery in British Churches* (London: John Murray, 1971), p. 74.] Plays were mounted in the medieval period at Braintree's church (in 1523, for example, 'A Play of St Swythyn' was apparently 'acted in the church on a Wednesday'). [W. A. Mephram, 'Mediaeval Plays in the Sixteenth Century at Heybridge and Braintree', *Essex Review*, 55 (1946), 8-18 (p. 15).]

²³ For example, although the rites of baptism, marriage and funerals were retained, the Catholic calendar of religious holidays and saints days was pruned and many rituals were simplified or abandoned. In the 'purged religious calendar only the feasts of the Apostles, the blessed Virgin, St George, the Nativity, Easter day, St John the Baptist, and St Michael the Archangel would be preserved as high holy days or days of general offering. Ascension day, All Hallows day, and Candlemas day were also preserved as days to "be kept holy and solemnly".' [David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989), p. 5.] As Collinson observes, 'calendarwise, the Reformation amounted to the intrusion of the working season into the months traditionally associated with a kind of holy play. [...] In place of the seasonal complexities of the old calendar, the secular and festive half years, there was now a new rhythm of working days and sabbaths, its keystone a weekly day to be set apart for the learning of religious duties'. [Collinson, p. 55.]

²⁴ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven and London: Yale University, 1992), p. 582.

²⁵ Church attendance was a statutory obligation, Queen Elizabeth's first Parliament decreeing 'compulsory church attendance for everyone above fourteen on all Sundays and holy days.' Anyone who did not observe the decree was to 'forfeit for every such offence twelve pence, to be levied by the churchwardens to the use of the poor.' [F. G. Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts* (Chelmsford: Essex County Council, 1973), p. 75.] The fines for non-attendance were increased in 1581 to 'twenty pounds per person for each period of a month of twenty-eight days [...] absence from Church without excuse'. [Hugh Aveling, *Northern Catholics: The Catholic Recusants of the North Riding of Yorkshire, 1558-1790* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), p. 122.]

spaces in which secular as well as religious events took place. Court sessions, schools, fairs, and parochial celebrations (such as church ales) were held at numerous Elizabethan and Jacobean churches.²⁶ Some early modern churches hosted civic gatherings as well (e.g. in Cirencester 'the upper floors of the south porch were for a long time used as the Town hall').²⁷ Church buildings and grounds also continued to be used for recreational activities including sporting competitions and plays.²⁸

The Church and Drama

By the sixteenth century there was a long tradition of performing plays in and around churches. Religious drama and church performances were subject to more careful, and occasionally critical, scrutiny in post-Reformation England (e.g. in 1542 Edmund Bonner, bishop of London prohibited 'clergy allowing "common plays, games, or interludes" in churches or chapels').²⁹ However, religious plays were performed in the early modern period (sometimes under the supervision of church officials); and performances continued to be staged in church buildings and their grounds.³⁰ This is true even at a late date in the sixteenth century when church officials were often braving punishment in the ecclesiastical courts by allowing performances in their churches. Many churches sponsored local and professional play performances as well.³¹

²⁶ A Visitation court was held, for instance, in the church of Sutton in Cleveland in 1615. [This information was communicated in a private letter from C. C. Webb, archivist at the Borthwick Institute of Historical Research (15th September, 1998).] At Long Melford in Suffolk 'the multiplication table' painted 'on the east wall of the Lady Chapel' is a reminder of the chapel's use as a school. [M. D. Anderson, p. 72.] Similarly, records of church ales in and outside churches (as at Hatch in 1615) are common.

Indirect evidence of the diverse secular uses to which churches and churchyards were put in the early modern period is afforded by the Church Canons of 1604. Order eighty-eight forbade, 'plays feasts, banquets, suppers, church ales, drinkings, temporal courts or leets, lay-juries, musters or any other profane usage, to be kept in the church, chapel or church yard'. [David Dymond, 'God's Disputed Acre', unpublished paper, 1997, 1-31 (p. 20).] By implication, these were all activities known to have been practised in contemporary churches and their grounds.

²⁷ M. D. Anderson, p. 72.

²⁸ References to sporting activities on church grounds include 'football (at White Colne, Essex, in 1590), stool-ball (at Rushbury in 1621), cricket (at Boxgrove, Sussex in 1622), 'cat' (at Fordington, in 1631) and bowls (at Osmotherley, Yorkshire in 1613)'. [Dymond, p. 22.]

²⁹ Lancashire, p. 222.

³⁰ In York in 1575 the Lord Archbishop was asked to help revise the town's religious plays. At the council meeting on the 2nd of July it was agreed that 'Mr Allyn Mr Maskewe aldermen Mr Roberte Brooke and Mr Andrewe Trewe shall goe and require of my Lord Archebishop his grace all suche ye play bookes as pertyne this cittie now in his graces Custodie and yat his grace will apoynt twoe or thre sufficient learned to correct the same wherein by the lawe of this realme they are to be reformed'. [REED: *York*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, 2 vols (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto; London: Manchester University, 1979), I, p. 378.]

³¹ For instance, in Chester the Dean and Chapter contributed to a number of the town's Whitsun plays. In 1568 they paid for 'a brode clothe againste the Witson plaies' and spent 'vj s.' on 'a barrel of bere

SOME DIAGRAMS
EXCLUDED ON
INSTRUCTION FROM
THE UNIVERSITY

Performances in Jacobean Churches and the decline of church performances

Church performances became less frequent in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, as complaints about playing in church grew and diocesan authorities sought to limit or prohibit their performance with growing rigour. Initially, criticism and control of church playing tended to focus upon the performance of plays upon Sundays and was voiced by reformers who sought to restrict various 'prophane' activities on the Sabbath, a project known as the 'Sabbatarian campaign'.³²

In the latter part of the Elizabethan period, a number of diocesan authorities issued orders that prohibited the production of plays in or outside their churches and used visitation articles to supervise the observance of these orders (e.g. the 1586 articles of Enquiry of Bishop Herbert Westfaling in the Diocese of Hereford included the following question: 'Whether any Lords of Misrule, dauncers, plaiers, or any other disguised persons do daunce, or play any vnseemely parts in the church, church-yard, or chappell-yard, or whether are there any playes or common drinking kept in the church, or church-yarde, who maintaine and accompany such').³³

The accession of King James brought with it a blanket ban on church playing. Order eighty-eight of the 1604 Church canons stated that churchwardens were 'forbidden to permit any "ludos scenicos" in their churches, chapels, or cemetries'.³⁴ However, as has been noted previously (e.g. p. 45), the existence of prescriptions does not ensure their observance and this order did not prevent plays being performed in and around Jacobean church buildings.

to yeue to the pleares to make them to drincke'. Similarly in 1571-2 'vj s.' was paid 'for ye hyre of a clothe for the mansyon ouer ye gates' at the time of the plays and 'viij s.' 'for a barrell of byre to ye players'. In the same period the Dean and Chapter rewarded a number of professional companies who visited the town (e.g. 'ij s.' was given to the 'Earl of Essex players' in 1582-3, and the Queen's players were rewarded in 1589-90, 1590-1 and in 1591-2).

[REED: *Chester*, ed. by Lawrence Clopper (London: Manchester University; Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1979), p. 84, p. 96, p. 135, p. 159, p. 162, p. 166.]

³² The campaign produced a considerable amount of literature, including *A Pleasaunt Dialogue Betweene a Souldiar of Barwicke and an English Chaplaine*, published in 1573, in which Anthony Gilby attacked 'Lewd playes' on Sundays. [Cited in Collinson, p. 256.]

Various recreations were deemed unsuitable pastimes for the Lord's day and the Lord's house by the authors of Elizabethan Sabbatarian literature. Hutton reports how 'a parson at Thornbury in Gloucestershire's Vale of Berkeley' called 'feasting, dancing, games, maypoles, church ales, and plays "heathenish routines"' to be kept away from Sunday. [Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1994; repr. 1996), p. 156.]

³³ Klausner, p. 58.

³⁴ Lancashire, p. 76.

The increasingly strict regulation of church performances in the sixteenth century and the attempted exclusion of plays from churches in the seventeenth century have often been regarded as consequences of an increasingly wide-spread anti-theatrical prejudice, fostered by some branches of the growing Puritan movement.³⁵ However, neither the growing opposition to playing in church or the decline in church performances in the seventeenth century were exclusively (or even primarily) the result of anti-theatrical feeling. Plays were not the only activity which reformers sought to exclude from Elizabethan and Jacobean churches. Church authorities and reformers were concerned about the use of churches for secular activities in general, and had been making efforts to move various recreational activities 'outwards' from the church.³⁶ Church dancing, fairs, ales, rush-bearings and sports were subject to similar critical scrutiny and were, likewise, prohibited on church property by some diocesan authorities (e.g. in 1572 Bishop Freke of Rochester offered a very full account of the recreations he considered unacceptable at churches, 'castigating "hopping, skipping, dancing, singing, football, playing bowls, dicing, carding, stool ball" and "any other unlawful game".')³⁷

Equally, attempts to exclude plays and other secular activities from churches were not only prompted by Puritan objections to the use of ecclesiastical property for 'prophane' pursuits. Contemporary evidence reveals that Church authorities and reformers were sometimes motivated by more pragmatic concerns (e.g. concerns about preserving order).³⁸

³⁵ The same explanation is offered for the more general decline in provincial playing and for the increasing regulation of performances in other buildings, such as town halls, in the Jacobean period, as noted in chapters one and two (e.g. pp. 40-1, p. 62).

Stephen Gosson articulated some of the Puritan objections to drama in his *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* (1582): 'In Stage Playes for a boy to put on the attyre, the gesture, the passions of a woman; for a meane person to take upon him the title of a Prince with counterfeit porte, and traine, is by outwarde signes to shewe them selves otherwise then they are, and so within the compasse of a lye'. [Louis Montrose, 'The Purpose of Playing: Reflections on a Shakespearean Anthropology of Playing', *Helios*, 7 (1980), 51-74 (p. 55).]

³⁶ Dymond, p. 16.

³⁷ Dymond, p. 19.

³⁸ As Underdown notes, in a time when there was concern about 'collapsing familial discipline' and a 'crisis of order' revels 'were an obvious scapegoat. [...] The Puritan Philip Stubbes made the point explicitly: "Are not unlawful games, plays, interludes and the like everywhere frequent...was there ever seen less obedience in youth of all sorts [...] towards their superiors, parents, masters and governors?"' [David Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660*, (Oxford: Oxford University, 1987), p. 48.]

Similarly, the introduction of ecclesiastical prohibitions was not the only factor involved in the decline of church playing. As English towns expanded during the late sixteenth century, new and larger buildings were often erected (such as town halls and school houses), providing alternative and, in some cases, more attractive playing venues for acting companies. For example, the growing importance of civic culture in many provincial towns had resulted in the town hall becoming a more prestigious social space than the church. The increasing power and wealth of secular authorities, such as town corporations, often meant that they were in a position to be more generous patrons than Elizabethan and Jacobean churches as well.

There may have been additional reasons for the decline in the number of parish plays organised by, and staged in, churches: for example, the gradual stigmatisation of various ex-church vestments as 'vestiges of popery' had important consequences for those churches whose parish productions drew upon a wardrobe of costumes made from old ecclesiastical copes. As Coldewey reports, most churches found themselves compelled to sell their costume wardrobes. Deprived of this resource, staging plays became less practicable financially.³⁹ The fact that some parishes had begun to institute new ways of raising money may also have contributed to the decline in parish plays sponsored and hosted by churches, one of the traditional purposes of parish plays having been to raise funds for the church. (Kumin reports that fund-raising ales and plays were replaced by a 'system of parish rates,' in a number of places.)⁴⁰

II- Performances in Churches

The Evidence

Surviving church accounts are the main source of direct evidence for play performances in Elizabethan and Jacobean churches. However, as a source of information they are limited. Many Elizabethan and Jacobean church accounts are not extant or are incomplete.⁴¹ The

³⁹ 'When these last "vestiges of popery" were disposed of, there could be no return to locally sponsored drama since the vestments- the source for the new players' garments- were sold along with the existing playing gear, the plays themselves were "extirpated even to the lowest roots" as a by-product.' [John C. Coldewey, 'The Last Rise and Final Demise of Essex Town Drama', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 36 (1975), 239-260 (p. 257).]

⁴⁰ As Kumin records: 'The experience of St. Andrew Holborn in London was symptomatic: churchwarden Thomas Bentley recorded' in 1584 'that church repairs had been financed by means of ales, plays, and other communal entertainments in previous times, while current regimes relied on assessments and benevolences of the rich'. [Beat Kumin, *The Shaping of A Community: the Rise and Reformation of the English Parish, c. 1400-1560* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), p. 214.]

⁴¹ For example, the churchwardens' accounts for St Breoke, Cornwall survive between 1556-78, 1591-92, 1597-98, but intervening records have been lost. [This information was provided in a letter from

information supplied in surviving records is not necessarily detailed and can be ambiguous as well (e.g. sometimes all that is recorded is a payment to a company of players). Equally, determining whether recorded performances were given in the church or its grounds can be difficult, the playing space not necessarily being noted. Although church-sponsored performances are likely to have been performed on site this cannot be assumed to be the case in all instances.⁴²

There are other sources of information about church plays. Inventories of church-owned costumes survive in some cases which provide an insight into the plays being performed. The existence of such inventories can also identify churches likely to have hosted performances when explicit records of plays are not to be found. At Bodmin in Cornwall, the church inventories of 1539 and 1566 list a number of costumes for religious plays, including three coats for Jesus, costumes for three tormentors and for two devils. Although there are no records of plays being performed at the church their ownership of playing clothes suggests that productions were staged occasionally.⁴³

Ecclesiastical and secular court records also include occasional references to play productions at churches. In these instances, the performances are usually recorded because they proved in some way controversial. Hence, we know that a play was performed in 1584 'in the church' at Duns Tew, Oxfordshire 'vpon a Saterdaye in the evening after service was donne' because the matter was raised at the Archdeacon's Court.⁴⁴ (The two churchwardens, John Castell and Robert Mesie, were cited, for 'keping enterludes and playes in the churche, and brawling in the churche abowte the same w[i]th one old Poulton'.)⁴⁵ Likewise, it is possible to infer that 'L. Bartlettes' Men played (or intended to play) at the church in Lenton in 1580. When the churchwardens were cited 'for sufferinge

Nick White, archivist at Cornwall Record Office, Truro (24th August, 1998).]

⁴² Coldewey describes how three sites appear to have been used for the parish performances mounted at Chelmsford in 1562: the 'pightle' (an area of open-ground near the church), the 'cornhill or market cross' and, possibly, 'the church itself' (St Mary's). [John C. Coldewey, 'The Digby Plays and the Chelmsford Records', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 18 (1975), 103-121 (p.105).]

⁴³ Lancashire, p. 85.

⁴⁴ E. R. Brinksworth, 'The Archdeacon's Court: Liber Actorum, 1584', *Oxfordshire Record Society*, 23 (1942), I, 124-5 (p. 125).

⁴⁵ Brinksworth, p. 124.

The wardens admitted that an interlude was played in the church, 'but by whom they knowe not, nor whose men they weare'. However, they denied that there was any 'brawling w[i]th Poulton at that tyme'. [Brinksworth, p. 125.]

fightinge braulinge and quarrellinge in the church' on the 19th November in this year, they answered that the people involved were 'my L. Bartlettes players'.⁴⁶

The information supplied by church court records can be intriguing in theatrical and social terms. In 1577, for instance, the churchwardens of West Ham, Essex (William Rokes and Vincent Hancottes) were presented at the Archdiaconal court 'to answer the charge of allowing two plays to be staged in the church during Lent' and of suffering 'the people [...] to stand upon the communion table, diverse of them'.⁴⁷ Indirect evidence about the staging of the play is afforded. If the people standing on the communion table were spectators, it could indicate that the performance was being mounted at the upper end of the nave, while the audience was accommodated behind the stage in the chancel (the usual location of the communion table) and before the stage in the lower part of the nave.⁴⁸

A number of contemporary accounts also provide evidence about churches used for plays and the nature of performances. In 1601 Samuel Harsnett recalled how in old church plays 'the nimble Vice would skip up nimbly like a Jack an apes into the devil's neck, and ride the devil a course'. While he suggests that such plays were no longer being performed his memory of them indicates that they were being performed in churches in the early part of the Elizabethan period.⁴⁹

Places of Performance

Surviving documents reveal that plays were staged in various ecclesiastical spaces. Parish church productions include performances inside churches (in the nave, chancel, chapel and at least one church loft) and in church yards, church houses and vicarages.⁵⁰ The 1564 play performances at King's college chapel, Cambridge are famous examples of drama being staged in the nave of a church; and a play staged at Stockbury parish church in 1600 provides a clear example of a chancel performance. The vicar, George Hawkes was presented in the local archdiaconal court having 'procured & suffered an Enterlude or

⁴⁶ R. F. B. Hodgkinson, 'Extracts from the Act Books of the Archdeacons of Nottingham', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society*, 30 (1926), p. 50.

⁴⁷ Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p. 148.

⁴⁸ The 'people' referred to could have been the players but one would expect them to have been referred to as such if this was the case.

⁴⁹ Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p. 138.

⁵⁰ Private chapels were also to be found in, or attached to, some early modern country houses and within university colleges. The use of these ecclesiastical spaces as performance places will not be addressed directly in this chapter, as previous chapters have touched upon both areas.

playe to be played and acted in the Chauncell of our *parishe* Church of Stockburie on Tuesdaye the xxijth daye of Julye 1600.’⁵¹ Further evidence that performances were occasionally staged in church chancels is provided by an order passed by the corporation of Boston in 1578. The order states that ‘there shalbe no mo playes nor interludes in the church nor in the chauncell nor in the hall nor scolle howse’.⁵² By implication, each of these spaces had been used for play performances in the past.

Indirect evidence of a chapel performance is afforded by another case brought before an ecclesiastical court. At Great Burstead in 1579, churchwarden William Hale was presented at the Archdeacon’s court, charged with giving ‘lisennse to players to playe in the chaple.’⁵³ The church loft recorded as a playing space was in the church at Great Marlow, Buckinghamshire. Sometime between 1593-5 the churchwardens received a payment of ‘ij s’ from ‘players for playinge in the church lofte.’⁵⁴

Churchyard productions include the play performed at Holy Trinity church in Bungay in 1566 and the Corpus Christi play staged at Sherborne in 1573-4.⁵⁵ Plays were also performed in the church house at Sherborne (e.g. the Queen’s Men played there in 1589). The only clear evidence of playing in a church vicarage thus far comes from Plymouth, where plays were staged in 1559-60 and 1575-6.⁵⁶

⁵¹ REED: *East Kent*, ed. by James Gibson, forthcoming.

⁵² ‘Records of Plays and Players in Lincolnshire, 1300-1585’, ed. by Stanley Kahrl, Malone Society: Collections, VIII (Oxford: Oxford University, 1969 [1974]), p. 5.

⁵³ Coldewey, ‘The Last Rise’, p. 248.

Although the word ‘chapel’ was sometimes used as a synonym for church, the term was also used to refer to ‘chapels’ within churches. Such a chapel would have been found at Great Burstead, in the church of St Mary Magdalen (where the performance is likely to have occurred). The church (which survives to the present) incorporates a south chapel.

[*Royal Commission on Historical Monuments: An Inventory of Historical Monuments in Essex*, IV (London: HMSO, 1923), p. 54.]

⁵⁴ REED: *Buckinghamshire*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston, forthcoming.

The church of All Saints at Great Marlow, where the play is likely to have been performed, was pulled down in 1832. [Alfred Heneage Cocks, ‘The Parish Church of All Saints’, Great Marlow’, *Records of Buckinghamshire*, 6 (1987-91), 326-340 (p. 326).] It is not clear where the church loft used by the players was located. The term ‘church loft’ usually refers to the area above the rood screen. At All Saints, Great Marlow there appear to have been several screens. According to the plan of the church prepared by Cocks there was probably a stone screen (between the ‘Parish Chancel’ and the nave), an oak screen (in the neighbouring ‘Town Chancel’ or Lady Chapel) and a screen or parclose ‘between the two aisles of the chancel’ (see plate 44). [Cocks, p. 327.] The plan does not indicate whether a loft was to be found upon any of the screens, although it is perhaps more likely that the loft was to be found upon one of the screens between the aisles of the chancel and the nave.

⁵⁵ ‘Records of Plays and Players in Norfolk and Suffolk, 1330-1642’, ed. by John M. Wasson and David Galloway, Malone Society: Collections, XI (Oxford: Oxford University, 1980-1), p. 143. A. D. Mills, ‘A Corpus Christi Play and Other Dramatic Activities in Sixteenth Century Sherborne, Dorset’, Malone Society: Collections, IX (Oxford: Oxford University, 1977), 1-15 (p. 12).

⁵⁶ Rosalind Conklin Hays, ‘Dorset Church Houses and the Drama’, *Research Opportunities in*

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Performances are, likewise, recorded in cathedral churches and their church-yards (e.g. Lord Beauchamp's players performed in Christ Church, Norwich in 1589-90, and in 1589 the Queen's Men performed in the 'colledge churche yarde' at Gloucester Cathedral).⁵⁷ Plays were occasionally mounted in other indoor spaces within the cathedral close as well, including deaneries and the lodgings of other important cathedral clerics.⁵⁸

In 1623-4 a performance was apparently staged in the hall of Exeter Cathedral's treasurer. The Vicars' Choral Accounts record that ten shillings was given 'vnto some of the secundaris and choristers with other youthes which acted a Commedye in Mr Lawe his hall Treasurer of the Church but intended for the colledge hall' (see plate 42).⁵⁹ Likewise, in York in 1598 'xl s.' was paid to 'players at Mr Doctor Bennittes', when Dr John Bennett was the Chancellor of the diocese (he was chancellor from 1589-1623).⁶⁰

The Nature of Church Playing Spaces

Parish church and cathedral spaces varied in size and in the facilities which they afforded players.⁶¹ Parish and cathedral churches were generally divided into two main areas, of varying proportions and architectural complexity, the nave and chancel.⁶² However, in

Renaissance Drama, 31 (1992), 13-23 (p. 21).

Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 234.

⁵⁷ *REED: Norwich*, ed. by David Galloway (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1984), p. 96.

REED: Cumberland, Westmorland, Gloucestershire, ed. by Audrey Douglas and Peter Greenfield (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1986), p. 311.

⁵⁸ Plays performed by the scholars of King's School, Canterbury, sponsored by the chapter of Canterbury in the Elizabethan period, may have been staged in the Dean's lodgings. [Harold Newcomb Hillebrand, *The Child Actors: A Chapter in Elizabethan Stage History* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), p. 14.]

⁵⁹ Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 192.

As the cathedral treasurer, Mr. Lawe is likely to have lived in the 'Treasurer's new house', built in 1402-3. [Herbert E. Bishop and Edith K. Prideau, *The Building of Exeter Cathedral* (Exeter: James G. Commin, 1922), p. 95.] The house extended 'from the north face of the North Tower past the chapel', and the 'hall' used for the performance was probably the dining-hall of the house. [Bishop and Prideau, p. 96, p. 112.] The building was demolished 'in late 1820-1' but 'the whole property was in ruinous condition right through the eighteenth century'. [Information kindly provided by Angela Doughty, Cathedral Archivist in a private communication (15th December, 1998).]

According to Doughty, the Treasurer's House 'was surplus to requirements because a long succession of Bishops of Exeter also held the office of Treasurer, so there was no need of a separate residence.'

⁶⁰ G. E. Aylmer and Reginald Cant, *A History of York Minster* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), p. 434.

⁶¹ The first division of England into parishes, 'is a subject of much obscurity, but it is possible that in the beginning the manor or town was usually the determining unit. Their extent, of course, varied enormously [...] from a few acres to several square miles.' [J. Charles Cox and C. B. Ford, *The Parish Churches of England*, revised by Bryan Little (London: Batsford, 1935; repr. 1961), p. 20.]

⁶² At St Andrew's Church in Hornchurch (Essex), for example, the chancel measures 40 1/4 feet by 16

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medieval and early modern English parish and cathedral churches, the nave and chancel were often separated in similar fashion, a wooden screen being fitted between them. These screens might be elaborately carved, as Bond records: 'Oak screens were of two parts; the upper part was constructed of open panels or traceried panels, so that the high altar might be in view, the lower part was sometimes left more or less open [...]; much more frequently it was of solid panels, either carved, or, in rich parishes, painted.' ⁶³

Access to the chancel was gained through one or more doorways fitted in the screen, while a gallery or 'church loft' might be fitted above the screen. These platforms 'were generally about six feet' in breadth but varied in width from 'five feet to as much as the eight feet of Minehead'.⁶⁴ In Medieval churches, the loft might support the rood of Mary and John or reliquaries, following the Reformation and the outlawing of Roods by the Protestant church, lofts were more often used as choir galleries or platforms for music. It was not unusual for the church organ to be set on the gallery, where one was available.⁶⁵ The association of galleries with artistic performance might account for the decision of certain players to perform upon the church loft, as appears to have been the case at Great Marlow (see plate 44).⁶⁶

1/2 feet, and the nave 33 1/2 feet by 18 1/2 feet (see plate 43). (The church is likely to have been the venue for the 1566 church performance in which the players did 'playe and declare certayn things against the Ministers.') While, in London, Trinity hall (or the Church of St Botolph without Aldersgate), in which plays are also known to have been performed in the Elizabethan period, only measured 14 x 32 feet in total. [*RCHM: Essex*, IV, p. 69. Lancashire, p. 156. Richard Hosley, 'Three Renaissance English Indoor Playhouses', *English Literary Renaissance*, 3 (1973), 166-182 (pp. 176-7).]

The naves and chancels of cathedral churches were generally larger than those of parish churches. For example, at Gloucester cathedral the nave alone measures 174 feet x 84 feet, while the total length of the building is 421 feet. [David Welander, *The History, Art and Architecture of Gloucester Cathedral* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1991), p. 547.] Meanwhile, at Norwich the chapel of the common hall was converted from the chancel of the Blackfriars Church which measured 100 x 33 feet. (The nave of the dissolved church was adopted as the City's common hall and measured 125 x 70 feet.) [Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. lxxxiv.]

⁶³ Francis Bond, *Screens and Galleries in English Churches* (London: Oxford University, 1908), p. 36.

⁶⁴ Bond, p. 111.

⁶⁵ 'At the time of the Reformation the removal of the Rood was ordered. [...] Its removal usually also involved the destruction of the rood-loft; nevertheless the screens were, for the most part retained.' [J. Charles Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts from the Fourteenth century to the Close of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1913), p. 82.] The use of screens was restored by royal order in 1561, 'though minus ornamentation such as the upper section displaying rood, parapet and images.' [Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p. 227.]

⁶⁶ This is not to say that lofts were not used by choristers before the Reformation or that galleries were not used in other ways in post-Reformation churches (e.g. some church lofts were used as private pews). [Bond, p. 119.] That plays may have been mounted in such confined spaces is striking, suggesting that players were adaptable and did not necessarily require large playing platforms.

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Outdoor performances were staged in the churchyard within which parish churches and cathedrals normally stood. Both parish and cathedral yards functioned as cemeteries, the latter sometimes being divided into two areas, a 'lay cemetery' (for 'parishioners of churches within the jurisdiction of the Dean and Chapter') and the other a graveyard for cathedral clerics. At Gloucester cathedral a wall 'extended south from the corner of the south transept, dividing the area on the south side of the church into the inner or monks' cemetery, lying on the east side of the wall, and the lay cemetery on the west side of the wall'. The performance by the Queen's Men in Gloucester's 'colledge church ye' in 1589 probably refers to a performance in the outer cemetery (see plate 45).⁶⁷

The size of parish church and cathedral churchyards varied but they were generally large, open spaces (e.g. when King Henry VIII sold Tewkesbury Abbey to the town following the dissolution of the monastery, the churchyard was described as 'containing by estimacion one acre and one rood of ground').⁶⁸ As Dymond observes:

Before the seventeenth century, although thousands of burials had already accumulated in the average church-yard, it had fewer surface obstructions than it has today. [...] It was probably hummocky and had the wooden crosses that are depicted in early illuminated manuscripts, but was not so cluttered with monumental stonework such as tombs, headstones, [...] and crosses. This was particularly true of the north side, often known as the 'wrong' or Devil's side, which was regarded (incorrectly) as unconsecrated, and tended to be used only for the burial of suicides, executed criminals and those who were unbaptised and excommunicated. That side often remained relatively empty until the nineteenth century.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ A. Hamilton Thompson, *The Cathedral Churches of England* (London: Macmillan, 1925), p. 158. Welander, p. 304.

Whether the 'colledge' church yard was the upper or lower churchyard at Gloucester is not explicitly stated in contemporary documents. However, it appears to have been another name for the lower (or outer) churchyard (i.e. the lay cemetery). The *Victoria County History of Gloucestershire* refers to the, 'great court, known as the lower churchyard or College Green'. [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of Gloucestershire*, IV, ed. by N. M. Herbert (Oxford: Oxford University, 1988), p. 287.]

⁶⁸ James Bennett, *The History of Tewkesbury* (Tewkesbury: James Bennett, 1830; repr. Dursley: Alan Sutton, 1976), p. 357.

⁶⁹ Dymond, p. 3.

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By the sixteenth century, churchyards were also usually walled. As large, uncluttered spaces, churchyards lent themselves to use for performances: as open areas they could be easily adapted for entertainment and were usually capable of accommodating large audiences. If walled, entry to performances could even be controlled, potentially permitting a degree of audience regulation.

Information about other ecclesiastical spaces (such as vicarages and private cathedral lodgings) and the performances staged within them is generally limited. The lodgings of cathedral deans and other important clerics (e.g. the treasurer and the chancellor) could be extensive, containing several rooms which might be adapted for playing. At Canterbury, for instance, the Deanery is thought to have been converted from a building called the 'New Lodgyng', a 'beautiful, and excellent edifice' originally erected as a Priory by Thomas Goldston at the beginning of the fifteenth century.⁷⁰ The building contained, 'chambers, dining-halls, solars or upper chambers' and was 'provided with a handsome porch'.⁷¹ When fire damaged the building during the Elizabethan period, the building was renovated. Plays are reputed to have been staged within 'the great hall' of the deanery by boys from King's School in Canterbury.⁷² The hall would have lent itself to this use; and it is likely that other performances in private clerical residences were also staged within halls, where available. Similarly, in smaller lodgings, play performances would probably be given in one of the largest rooms, as was the case when plays were performed in lay private residences.⁷³

Information about parish 'church houses' (and their use for drama) is more plentiful. Church houses were not found in 'every parish'.⁷⁴ Most 'numerous in southern and south-

⁷⁰ Robert Willis, *The Architectural History of the Conventual Buildings of the Monastery of Christ Church in Canterbury* (London: Taylor and Company, 1869), p. 109.

⁷¹ Willis, p. 109.

⁷² After the Civil War 'Cromwell's soldiers demolished the playing place (called 'the Dean's great hall') 'for being prophaned by the King's Scholars having acted plays there'. [Hillebrand, p. 14.]

⁷³ The size of the chambers used for performances in different cathedrals may have varied considerably. The location of play performances sponsored by cathedral chapters is not always recorded. In these cases, it is possible that other rooms traditionally associated with entertainment and hospitality were used. (For example, at Gloucester the 'great guesten hall' might have been used for plays, the hall being a space traditionally used for entertaining 'merchants [...] and other visitors of middling rank'.) [Welander, p. 306, p. 311.]

⁷⁴ John Aubrey, cited in Dymond, p. 17.

Many church houses were built in the medieval period and were usually 'provided so that local people, either as parishioners or as members of religious and social guilds, could enjoy the conviviality and festivity which arose naturally out of their religious lives and parochial loyalties, at the same time easing their consciences by avoiding the physical and moral constraints of consecrated ground'. [Dymond, p. 16.]

western England', they were usually located 'close to the church' and 'erected or bought' by the church 'for the purpose of becoming the focus of the social life of the parish'.⁷⁵ The houses were sometimes conversions of existing buildings (e.g. Wimborne church house was converted from the 'decayed Chapel' of St Peter, as is revealed by the 1544 churchwardens' accounts in which record is made of 'costs and charges "that was bestowyd upon ye new chirche hows, otherwise called saynct Peter's"').⁷⁶ As a result of their differing origins, church houses varied in size and lay-out. However, most houses contained at least one room capable of accommodating a sizeable parish gathering.

The church houses at Sherborne and Wimborne Minster, 'built or renovated [...] in the first half of the sixteenth century', both contained an upper room which was used for a variety of private and parochial recreations and 'hired out to players in the Elizabethan period.' In 1597-8 and 1598-9, the 'queens players' paid for 'the vse of the churchowse' at Sherborne, and in 1599-1600 'xvj s.' was received 'of the younge Men of the Towne for playinge in the churchouse'. In Wimborne '4d.' was received 'of John Merewether for a "playe in the churche howse"' in 1573, and two shillings was received 'of players that played in the church howse' in 1589.⁷⁷

However, the two church-house rooms appear to have differed in their dimensions. At Sherborne, the upper room occupied the whole of the church house's upper storey ('although one end may have been partitioned to make a separate storeroom').⁷⁸ In the sixteenth century, this upper room measured 116 feet x 19 feet and 'was open to the roof', while A. Lindsay Clegg suggests that 'Wimborne's church house' and its upper room were 'tiny'.⁷⁹

Although varying in size, church houses (including those at Sherborne and Wimborne) often shared similar facilities. For instance, as spaces intended for parish recreations, including feasting and drinking at parish ales, provision was sometimes made for baking

⁷⁵ Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 287.

⁷⁶ John Hutchins, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset*, ed. by W. Skipp and J. N. Hodson, 4 vols (Westminster: Nichols, 1865; repr. Trowbridge: Redwood Press, 1973), III, p. 260.

⁷⁷ Conklin Hays, 'Dorset Church Houses', p. 13, pp. 20-1.
Hutchins, III, p. 261.

⁷⁸ The Sherborne churchwardens had built the 'long two-storey' church house on the grounds of an earlier almshouse in Half Moon Street. The upper floor was reserved for parish use. The ground floor was eventually 'divided into four shops and a kitchen and rented out by the Elizabethan churchwardens for total receipts over twenty shillings per year'. [Conklin Hays, 'Dorset Church Houses', p. 14.]

⁷⁹ Conklin Hays, 'Dorset Church Houses', p. 14 and p. 16.

and brewing on-site. We know that there was an oven and 'house kettle' at Wimborne, as payments were made for their repair in 1581-2 and 1588-9, and 1572-3, respectively. Similarly, at Sherborne, the church house was 'equipped with iron racks and spits and a great brass pot' and, by 1574, 'two dozen platters and a dozen pottingers.'⁸⁰ It was also usual for church houses to be supplied with trestles, forms and other domestic utensils. At Somerton we know that there were forms because in 1607-8 they had to be mended after a play performance at the 'parrishe house', and at Sherborne there were 'table boards, benches by the walls, and forms and trestles'.⁸¹ Such equipment was not only available for use during parish festivities. It could often be hired with the church house for private functions (including plays presumably).⁸² Some church houses were home to military ware (including armour) and other more unusual equipment as well (e.g. fire-fighting tools), which was, likewise, available for hire by local people and playing troupes.⁸³

The availability of assorted equipment and the association of church houses with parish recreation may have encouraged their use as playing venues. Indeed, in towns such as Sherborne and Wimborne, the church house may have been 'the best available theater'.⁸⁴ The fact that companies (professional and local) were prepared to pay for their use suggests that they were considered attractive playing venues.⁸⁵

Performers

Extant records reveal that performances in churches were mounted by visiting troupes and parish amateurs. Churchwardens' accounts relating to local parish productions are

⁸⁰ Conklin Hays, 'Dorset Church Houses', p. 14 and p. 21.

⁸¹ *REED: Somerset*, ed. by James Stokes (with Robert J. Alexander), 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1996), I, p. 220.

Conklin Hays, 'Dorset Church Houses', p. 14

⁸² In Sherborne, 'either church house, church vessels, or both were hired, probably by parishioners (and not counting rentals to players), more than one hundred times during the reign of Elizabeth' (e.g. the 'church house vessels' were 'used for a servant's wedding' in 1575-6). [Conklin Hays, 'Dorset Church Houses', p. 20.]

⁸³ For example, in 1567-8, the inventory for Sherborne's church house listed 'a corselet and pike' and 'a black jack'. [Conklin Hays, 'Dorset Church Houses', pp. 14-5.]

⁸⁴ Conklin Hays, 'Dorset Church Houses', p. 16.

That the church houses of Sherborne and Wimborne were perhaps the best theatres available in the towns could find confirmation in the fact that 'many communal activities [...] seem to have taken place' in their church houses. [Conklin Hays, 'Dorset Church Houses', p. 16.]

⁸⁵ Generally, troupes did not have to pay for the use of the spaces in which they performed in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period. It was more usual for companies to receive payments when performing in town halls, although there are exceptions. [In Elizabethan Blandford players were charged for performing in the town hall on several occasions (as in 1588 when three shillings was received from players for playing at the hall).] [Conklin Hays, 'Dorset Church Houses', p. 22.]

generally more detailed than those recording performances by visiting companies (professional or amateur). Visiting troupes were usually only paid for performing (e.g. at Leverington, Cambridgeshire in 1566 'xij s.' was given 'to ye players of bollyngbroke').⁸⁶ The records of church-sponsored parish plays are rather different. The performers are usually unpaid, but the church often paid for, or provided, costumes, properties and staging materials (e.g. when the church of Holy Trinity, Bungay sponsored a parish play in the churchyard in 1566, payments relating to the play included five shillings 'paid to Edward Molle and his sonne for iiij or (four) daies worke hanging the Bell and for making the scaffolld for the Interlude in the church-yarde meate and wag[es]; 'xij d.' paid 'to Oldale for stayning certayne clothes for ye Interlude'; and 'iiij d.' given 'to Holbrook for his visors').⁸⁷ As church performances by visiting companies were organised and treated rather differently from parish productions, the two kinds of performance are described separately below.

Church Productions by Visiting Companies

Church performances by travelling troupes might occur at any time during the year.⁸⁸ They were not occasional productions as a rule (i.e. performances given in celebration of a specific event or holiday), although some troupes may have timed their visits to particular towns and their churches to coincide with known fair days or church holidays, such as Christmas (e.g. in 1562-3 Long Sutton's churchwardens paid 'vj s' to 'the players of Wisbich the Monday in easter weke', presumably for performing in the church).⁸⁹

Arranging to Perform

Professional touring companies often announced their arrival in a new village or town by sounding drums and trumpets. Amateur troupes touring neighbouring towns and villages may have attracted attention to their arrival in similar fashion. Some amateur companies appear to have publicized their performances in a more traditional manner, reading banns

⁸⁶ REED: *Cambridgeshire*, ed. by Anne Brannen, forthcoming.

⁸⁷ Wasson and Galloway, p. 143.

⁸⁸ The churchwardens' accounts of Long Sutton include payments for performances throughout the year (e.g. in 1566-7 the wardens paid six shillings to 'ye Players of Gosbertowne ye xxix of June', five shillings 'to Sir John Gaskens players ye xvijth of november', 'vj s. viij d' to 'ye players of Mowlton ye xvij of december', and 'vj s viij d' to 'the players of Nottyngham ye xxij of february'). [Kahrl, p. 73.] The date on which the payments are recorded may not reflect the date of the performances precisely, but they are a general guide to the timing of productions.

⁸⁹ Kahrl, p. 72.

for their play.⁹⁰ In some cases, a proclamation may have been made in the church where the performance was to be given. Announcing play performances in churches was not unknown, if occasionally controversial (e.g. at Beoley in Worcestershire in 1611, ‘Iohannem Butcher’ was presented for ‘proclayminge a playe in the church the Sabaoth daye’).⁹¹

The commencement of some performances may have been announced by the ringing of the church bells. Sounding the bells may even have been a way of summoning audiences, as it was a means of calling parishioners to church services. This may be what happened in 1579, when the churchwardens of Great Burstead were charged with allowing players ‘to playe in the chapele, who towlde the Bell there’.⁹²

Having arrived in a town or village, troupes (professional and amateur) wishing to perform in a local church needed to gain permission to perform from the town’s mayor and the church’s officers (usually the churchwardens or the Dean and Chapter).⁹³ Companies may not always have been scrupulous about seeking permission (civic or ecclesiastic) for their performances. The support and encouragement of parishioners may have been taken as sufficient authorisation to use the parish church as a playing venue in some instances. Equally, gaining official authorisation for performances was not without its complications. One churchwarden might authorise a church performance without consulting or gaining the agreement of the other churchwarden, even though they were both responsible for managing church affairs.

The interlude played in the church at Duns Tew (Oxfordshire) in 1584 was staged with the ‘consent of [...] one of the churchwardens’, Robert Mesie.⁹⁴ This may have been the case at West Ham (Essex) in 1576 as well. Both churchwardens were charged with suffering ‘ii playes’ to be ‘kepte in the church by comon players’, but one of the wardens claimed that he had not granted prior permission to the players : ‘the same William Rokes affirmed that he, comminge into the church, perseved that the players went about to playe; he speaking to them, declared that he wold not give his consent, that theie shold not play there, and he

⁹⁰ The churchwardens of Long Sutton rewarded various companies of players who visited the town with their banns. In 1564-5, for example, ‘x s’ was paid ‘to the bayne of Leake’ and ‘x s’ to ‘ye bayne of boston’. [Kahrl, p. 72.]

⁹¹ Klausner, pp. 360-1.

⁹² Coldewey, *The Last Rise*, p. 248.

⁹³ Performances to be given within cathedral precincts may not have required the same civic authorisation, cathedrals and their closes being treated as independent communities.

⁹⁴ Brinksworth, p. 125.

would not be blamed for them; but he taried & heard the play, & therin he consented to the play'.⁹⁵ The players were already prepared to perform in the church before he knew of their plans to stage a play. As Rokes was only fined 'ij s vi d', while the other warden, Vincent Hancottes was fined five shillings, it is possible that Hancottes was the warden responsible for allowing the players into the church in the first place.

If permission to perform was granted, and the church was to sponsor the performance, professional companies might have offered their patrons the opportunity to choose the play performed (as was customary when such troupes visited noble houses).⁹⁶ Rewards for church performances varied but could be generous, and comparable with the gifts received from noble houses and corporations. At Long Sutton payments to players vary between the 'x d' paid in 1570-1 to 'certaine players' and the 'vj s viijd' paid to 'the players of bullynbrocke' in 1566-7; and at Bewdley in 1573-4 the Earl of Leicester's Men were paid 'xx s' by St Andrew's churchwardens.⁹⁷ Financial rewards might be complemented by displays of hospitality (e.g. the Queen's Men may have been entertained with 'wyne and sugar' by the Dean and Chapter of Chester in 1591-2, the payment of 'xl s' to the troupe being preceded by an expense of 'ij s' on these items').⁹⁸

Companies which were obliged to pay a fee for performing on ecclesiastical property are likely to have recouped their money and created a profit by charging spectators for entry to their performances or by making audience collections at the end of performances.⁹⁹ Professional troupes may have made audience gatherings (or charged entry fees) even when they were rewarded by church officials.

The Plays

The plays performed by professional companies at Elizabethan and Jacobean churches are generally unrecorded. Other sources of information make it clear, however, that the

⁹⁵ Coldewey, 'The Last Rise', p. 247.

⁹⁶ Permission to perform was not always granted. When 'Lord Mordens' men visited the church at Syston in 1602, they were paid twelve pence 'because they should not play in the Church'. [Murray, II, p. 402.] A choice of play was not necessarily offered either. Visiting amateur performers were often travelling with a specific parish play only, and, therefore, would not have been able to offer ecclesiastical officers a choice.

⁹⁷ Kahrl, p. 73.

Klausner, p. 361.

⁹⁸ Clopper, p. 166.

⁹⁹ This usually only applies to church houses. The fees for hiring these buildings varied. At Sherborne, for example, receipts between 'vj d' and 'iiij s vj d' are recorded. At Wimborne receipts from players rise from '4 d' to '2 s'. [Conklin Hays, 'Dorset Church Houses', pp. 20-1, p. 16.]

repertories of professional English companies in the early modern period were dominated by contemporary, secular works.¹⁰⁰ Most of the plays which they performed in early modern churches are, therefore, likely to have been secular. In the case of London troupes, the plays performed on tour are likely to have derived from their playhouse repertories (after the 1570s). Evidence about local troupes indicates that church performances by visiting amateurs included religious plays, folk dramas (e.g. Robin Hood plays) and other secular plays.¹⁰¹ Performances by touring schoolboy or chorister troupes may have included classical or classically-derived dramas, of the kind also performed at the universities.¹⁰²

Performance Preparations

Most play performances at churches and cathedrals by visiting troupes appear to have been staged indoors.¹⁰³ The 'east part of the nave or what is sometimes referred to as the crossing in churches and cathedrals with transepts' was, as White notes, 'a most suitable location for plays'.¹⁰⁴ As well as usually being an open area and, therefore, adaptable as a playing space, some churches were fitted with galleried screens (dividing the nave from the chancel) which could provide a backdrop and, potentially, an upper playing area for performances. At the same time, the remainder of the nave could be used to accommodate the audience, just as it accommodated parishioners during church services. By the end of the sixteenth century, players could often expect to find the nave equipped with seating as well.¹⁰⁵ As the church space associated with parishioners and parish assembly, the nave

¹⁰⁰ Religious plays were not unknown in the repertories of professional Elizabethan and Jacobean companies (e.g. Lord Strange's Men performed a 'play of Jerusalem' in 1591), but they were rare. [Lancashire, p. 220]

¹⁰¹ In 1562, for instance, Chelmsford's parishioners took part of their cycle of religious plays to Maldon. The religious content of the plays is revealed by the nature of the costumes and props prepared for the productions. A 'hell' and a 'temple' were built, William Hewet was paid for 'making the vices coote', and John Wryght was paid for 'makynge a cotte of lether for Christ'. Meanwhile, in 1590-1 the churchwardens of St Brooke paid five shillings to 'the players of Robyn Hooode that came from St Cullombe the Lower.'

Karl Pearson, *The Chances of Death and Other Studies in Evolution*, 2 vols (London: Edward Arnold, 1897), II, p. 415, p. 419.

REED: Dorset/ Cornwall, ed. by Rosalind Conklin Hays and C. E. McGee, Sally L. Joyce and S. Newlyn (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1999), p. 507.

¹⁰² See p. 98.

¹⁰³ Whether this is equally true of cathedral performances by visiting companies is more difficult to determine, the location of performances generally being unrecorded and a wider choice of spaces being potentially available in cathedral precincts. As well as the church and churchyard, players might be invited to perform in one of the private lodgings to be found in cathedral closes, such as the deanery.

¹⁰⁴ Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p. 146.

¹⁰⁵ St Martin's Church, Leicester, was fitted with 'moveable benches without backs, and with low ends

lent itself to use for parish entertainments (such as plays) at a symbolic as well as a pragmatic level.¹⁰⁶

Whether the performances given by visiting companies were mounted upon stages is generally unrecorded. However, it is likely that temporary wooden platforms were erected for many performances, particularly when the players were professionals. Where available, stages might be erected before the screen, the actors using the screen doorways as entry and exit points, while the area behind the screen might have served as a tiring area.¹⁰⁷ In other cases, side chapels or the arms of a transept might have served the latter purpose, as appears to have been the case when Cambridge students mounted plays in King's College chapel for the entertainment of Queen Elizabeth in 1564.¹⁰⁸

When performances were staged before the screen or chancel, the audiences are likely to have been accommodated before the stage, in the main body of the nave, as indicated above. However, in churches where there was no screen, audience members might stand or sit in the chancel as well as the nave. Likewise, in churches with screens some spectators might be seated upon the screen, as was the case at the King's College chapel performances of 1564. A contemporary describes how there was 'another stage for ladies and gentlewomen to stand on' in 'the rood loft'.¹⁰⁹

Times of Performance

The time of performances by visiting companies is another detail rarely noted. Some performances were staged in the day (e.g. the performance at Stockbury church in 1600 was staged in the afternoon); other productions were performed in the evening by artificial

finialed' before 1568-9. In 1568-9 the benches were 'anchored [...] to the stone floor'. [Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p. 147.]

¹⁰⁶ That the nave was traditionally thought of as belonging 'to the people' is demonstrated by the fact that usually 'the maintenance of the nave, aisles, tower and porch was the responsibility of the parishioners through the churchwardens', while maintaining the chancel was the responsibility of 'the rector'.

Betjeman, p. 46.

Emmison, p. 248.

¹⁰⁷ Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p. 146.

¹⁰⁸ Matthew Stokys described how the stage in the chapel was built 'in ye bodye of ye churche [...] conteynyng ye breadth of the churche from thone syde vnto thother yat ye chapels myght serve for houses.' [Cited in Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p. 143.] This could mean that the entries to the chapels were prepared as stage houses (representing different locations in the play), but it is equally possible that Stokys was referring to the use of the chapels as tiring-houses. The houses may have served both purposes.

¹⁰⁹ E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), I, p. 226.

light. An interlude performed at Duns Tew church in 1585 was staged 'vpon a Saterdaye in the evening after service'.¹¹⁰

The Nature of Audiences

While some of the recorded performances by visiting troupes at cathedrals may have been staged privately (e.g. before a select body of cathedral clerics and officers) almost all parish church productions are likely to have been performed publicly, open to any interested local people.¹¹¹ Well-publicized performances might have been attended by people from neighbouring communities and parishes as well.

It was increasingly common for parish and cathedral churches to be fitted with some form of seating by the late sixteenth century, as noted above (p. 263). Elizabethan and Jacobean performances in churches are likely to have taken advantage of this fact, using available seating to accommodate spectators. However, standing spectators were probably not unusual. Not all churches were provided with seating; and, in some cases, companies may have chosen to clear the audience area of furniture in order to accommodate a larger audience.

When diverse audiences were assembled, their arrangement could have been determined randomly. However, in an age when rules increasingly governed the allocation of seating for church services, it is possible that audiences for indoor church plays were also arranged more formally. Spectators might have been arranged hierarchically, for instance, the seats or spaces nearest the performance area being reserved for important parishioners and clerics, as was the case for services at some churches.¹¹² Certainly, it would not be surprising to find that some of the best seats were reserved for corporation dignitaries when the corporation was responsible for patronising the church entertainment, as was

¹¹⁰ Gibson, *REED: East Kent*, forthcoming.
Brinksworth, p. 125.

¹¹¹ The audiences are therefore likely to have been socially mixed, containing men, women and children of all ages and social groups. Some cathedral performances may have been open to the laity as well. When the Queen's Men played at Gloucester cathedral in 1589, they may have chosen to perform in the churchyard because it would be able to accommodate a large audience of civilians as well as clerics.

¹¹² A 1624 vestry order from St Edmund's, Sarum states that, 'according to auncientt use [...] boathe the seates at the ends of the two foremost Pewes in the Churche, where the Maior and Aldermen sitt are proper onlie to be preserved and kepte for the 24 onelie.' [Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 68.]

occasionally the case (e.g. in 1569-70 Dartmouth's corporation paid 'j li' to 'my Lorde of Leacesters men' that 'plaid at church').¹¹³

Men and women may have been seated in different parts of the church for some performances as well. Again, this was sometimes the case for religious services. At St Oswald's in Durham, an order was passed in 1608 which stated that 'no man younge or olde shall in tyme of Divine Service sytt vpon the sides or edges of womens seates upon payne of ij d', revealing that there were separate areas of seating for men and women.¹¹⁴

Parish Church Productions

The Auspices and the Plays

Parish plays might be performed as part of holiday celebrations or for a specific purpose, such as fund-raising (e.g. the plays performed in Tewkesbury Abbey in 1600 were staged 'at Whitsuntide' to raise money for the building of 'a battlement vppon the toppe of the Churche tower').¹¹⁵ Sometimes the play was only one part of a larger fund-raising event.¹¹⁶ Parish productions at church were not confined, however, to special occasions or any one time of year.

The subjects and titles of the plays performed by visiting companies are largely undocumented, but the parish plays staged at churches are occasionally named (e.g. the churchwardens' accounts for St Breoke, Cornwall in 1557-8 apparently allude to a play of *Susanna*).¹¹⁷ Generic descriptions of the plays performed are found sometimes found as well. In 1578-9, for instance, two spectators recorded that they had been to see a 'King play' in Hascombe church in January.¹¹⁸ Many parishes chose to produce religious dramas.¹¹⁹

¹¹³ Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 66.

¹¹⁴ Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 191.

¹¹⁵ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 540.

¹¹⁶ The church ale organised at Wooton-St Lawrence, Hampshire, in 1610 may have included a play, two shillings being 'paid to Whitburn for his play'. [Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 281.] The payment could have been for musical services but, in this instance, it would have been more usual to refer to his 'playing'.

¹¹⁷ In a marginal reference it is recorded that 'Svsanna ys Playe'. [Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 507.]

¹¹⁸ In a deposition given before a Surrey magistrate on 12 th January, 1578 George Longhurst and John Mill stated that 'on Sondaye last they were taken together at widow Michelles house in the parish of Hascombe, and they delyvered their mares to kepe till they came agayne, and sayde that they wold goo to Hascombe churche to a kynge playe wch then was there.' [J. G. N., 'A King Play', *Notes and Queries*, second series, 12 (1861), 210.] The play is likely to have been one of the King plays based upon the Kings of Cologne, and representing the 'adoration of the Magi'. [Cox, *Churchwardens'*

There are also a number of records of parishioners performing folk dramas at church. For example, a Robin Hood play was apparently staged at Brandsby church (Yorkshire) in 1615, with recusant parishioner, George Pearson taking the role of the sheriff.¹²⁰ George Sherwin, who played the part of Robin, is not recorded as a recusant but is likely to have been a Catholic-sympathiser, and married an openly Catholic wife.¹²¹ Pearson and

Accounts, p. 284.] It may have involved 'the Star of Epiphany being displayed from the rood-loft, as at St. Margaret's, Westminster.' [Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 284.] The play's performance around Twelfth night makes it unlikely to have been one of the other dramas also known as King plays (or games) in the period, involving the election of a King as a figure of revelry, as the latter were usually performed at Midsummer.

- ¹¹⁹ When Sherborne mounted their Corpus Christi play in 1572 payments were made by the wardens 'for a peacke of Wheaten meale for to macke louttes Wyfe' and 'the new dressyng of Lottes wyfe'; and money was spent upon 'staynyng of Sodom clothes' for the 1573 production. As Hays notes, these payments suggest that the Corpus Christi play staged several times in the 1570s was a 'single play representing at least some parts of the familiar tale from Genesis of the angels' visit to Sodom, the subsequent flight of Lot and his family from the city as it was destroyed by fire, and Lot's wife's fateful backward glance that turned her to a pillar of salt'. [Rosalind Conklin Hays, '“Lot's Wife” or “The Burning of Sodom”: The Tudor Corpus Christi Play at Sherborne, Dorset', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 33 (1994), 99-125 (p. 99).]

The religious plays staged by parishioners did not necessarily take Biblical stories as their subject matter. The play performed at Hornchurch in 1566 in which the actors 'did play and declare certayn things against the ministers' may have been a play in which local ministers were attacked or in which the contemporary church and current issues of religious debate were addressed. [Coldewey, 'The Last Rise', p. 246.]

- ¹²⁰ 'The Medieval Church of *All Saints* of Brandsby' no longer survives. However, it 'appears to have stood on part of the site now occupied by the Hall' (Brandsby Hall). The old building 'was pulled down about the year 1767'. [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Yorkshire, North Riding*, II, ed. by William Page (London: St. Catherine Press, 1923), p. 106.] At the 1615 visitation court held at Sutton Church, Cleveland, George Pearson was accused with eighteen other people of 'not coming to church nor receiving communion for divers years last past', indicating that he was a recusant. [The Borthwick Institute of Historical Research (York), The Archbishop of York's Visitation Court Book, V 1615/ CB fol. 256r. This reference was kindly drawn to my attention and transcribed by Christopher Webb, archivist at The Borthwick Institute.] Confirmation that he was a recusant is found in the records of the secular courts as well. Pearson's name is listed in recusant rolls made in 1611 (at the Thirsk Sessions, 3-5 April), 1612 (at the Helmesley Sessions, 8 July), 1613 (at the Helmesley Sessions, 8 July), 1614 (at the Helmesley Sessions, 8 July) and 1616 (at the Helmesley Sessions, 9 July). [Cited in 'The Memorandum Book of Richard Cholmeley of Brandsby, 1602-1623', *North Yorkshire County Record Office Publications*, 44 (1988), pp. 240-2.] In these records he is identified as a 'labourer' and as a servant of Richard Cholmeley, esquire of Brandsby. [*Cholmeley*, p. 242.] Cholmeley was a wealthy local gentleman, owning extensive lands and properties in the area (including estates at Brandsby and Brafferton). He was also a well-known Catholic. 'Throughout his notebook Richard Cholmeley records the payments of his [recusancy] fines, the attempts of informers and officials to gather evidence against him and his wife for breaches of laws against recusancy and his own attempts to avoid the full rigours of the law by bribery, by retaining lawyers to plead his case in the courts and by the adoption of all possible subterfuges.' [*Cholmeley*, p. viii.] Entries in the memorandum book which Cholmeley kept between 1602-1623 confirm that Pearson was one of his trusted servants during much of this period. (For example, in 1611 Cholmeley sent Pearson to London on business for him, carrying a considerable sum of money. On November 1st he records: 'George Pearson I sent with him to London £xxx and he was to receive for me at London sent thether by Sir Henry Browne's watermen £xx more'.) [*Cholmeley*, p. 54.]

- ¹²¹ George Sherwin does not appear in the Brandsby recusancy rolls compiled in the 1610s and 1620s. This does not mean that he was not a Catholic sympathiser, however. Like Pearson, Sherwin was to

Sherwin were presented in the ecclesiastical courts as a result of the performance. George Pearson was cited 'for playing the sheriff at a rush bearing upon St. Lawrence day last being Sunday', and George Sherwin was cited for 'playing Robin Hood at the said rush bearing upon the said sabbath day'.¹²² (Neither man attended the visitation court session, but there is no record of them being punished for their non-appearance or for their performance in the play.)

In this instance although the play apparently performed was secular, some of the players' motives for staging it may have been religious. Recusant Brandsby parishioners such as Pearson were in perpetual danger of prosecution as religious outlaws and subversives. In Robin Hood they found a fellow outlaw and a 'champion of the oppressed'.¹²³ Likewise, in the traditional tales of his clashes with the Sheriff of Nottingham they were offered a portrait of an ingenious and successful subversive.¹²⁴ The parallels with their own experience as Catholics in an officially Protestant state (in which non-conformity was outlawed) could have encouraged them to adopt Robin Hood as a Catholic hero, symbolically, and to read the tales of Robin and the Sheriff as an allegory of the conflict between outlawed Catholicism and official Anglican authority.¹²⁵ That Pearson should play the role of the 'Sheriff' might seem at odds with this interpretation, but taking the role of a figure

work for the recusant Cholmeleys. The first allusion to Sherwin in Cholmeley's notebook occurs shortly after the 1615 visitation court at which reference was made to the Robin Hood play. On the 15th October Cholmeley notes that 'George Sherwyn prentishipp I did buye on John Lambley being one yere and as much as till Easter for £ 5 xij s. Thus 2s I allow that he eught me in this Michealmas rent xls. I am to pay Sherwyn as it shal grow dew after xxs per annum'. [*Cholmeley*, p. 104.] It may be that Pearson introduced and recommended Sherwin to his master; or that his performance as Robin Hood recommended him to Cholmeley. He also appears to have married a recusant Catholic woman. In the 1623 list of Brandsby recusants is found 'Anna wife of George Shiwin labourer.' [*Cholmeley*, p. 244.]

¹²² The Borthwick Institute (York), The Archbishop's Visitation Court Book, V 1615/ CB fol. 256v. Rushbearing was a ritual 'apparently confined to Westmorland, western Yorkshire, Cheshire, and Lancashire. All over the country fresh rushes were brought into buildings each summer and strewn upon the floors to afford comfort and warmth. But only in this region, apparently, were some of them woven with flowers and carried into the churches by women preceded by musicians, to be hung there.' [Hutton, p. 118.]

¹²³ Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 399.

¹²⁴ David Wiles describes how Robin Hood was conventionally perceived as 'an outlaw, a rebel against authority'; and he notes that 'the overturning of regular law and order was always implicit in the structure' of the Robin Hood plays and games. [David Wiles, *The Early Plays of Robin Hood* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1981), p. 20, p. 53.]

¹²⁵ Robin may also have appealed to the Brandsby parishioners being a mythical character with Northern associations: 'the writers of the earliest ballads [about Robin], notably the *Gest* and 'Robin Hood and the Potter', display a familiarity with the topography of Barnsdale.' [Wiles, p. 44.] Robin Hood's name would have been particularly familiar in the Brandsby area, being preserved in a local place-name, 'Robin Hood's bay'. Cholmeley made a tour of some of his properties in 1615, beginning on July 20th, which included staying at Robin Hood's bay. [*Cholmeley*, p. 99.] The traditional devotion of Robin in ballads and plays 'to the Virgin Mary' may also have made him attractive in the eyes of Pearson and his fellow Brandsby recusants. [Wiles, p. 56.]

of official authority could have been a way of adding a further twist to the performance, symbolically subverting Protestant order and authority in another way. As Pearson appears to have been aged over forty at the time of the performance, he was probably deemed too old to play the part of Robin as well.¹²⁶ Interpreted in this way, one can begin to see why recusants such as Pearson might be interested in staging a Robin Hood play. Potentially, such plays provided a covert vehicle through which they could articulate and address their own religious and social discontent.¹²⁷

Folk plays were not the only secular dramas performed by parishioners, as indicated above (p. 31). Some parishes may have performed secular plays derived from, or modelled upon dramas staged by professional companies in the London playhouses (e.g. *Canimore and Lionley*, the parish play performed at Methley in 1614 appears to have been in the tradition of the romance plays popular in the capital in the 1570s-80s and, again, in the early part of the seventeenth century).¹²⁸

Organisation

Responsibility for organising most parish plays in and outside churches and cathedrals appears to have been shared between parishioners and church officers (usually the wardens). While the churchwardens might be responsible for purchasing necessary staging materials and for paying people for their service, parishioners might be nominated to fulfill particular tasks and were usually the performers. (When the parishioners of New Romney

¹²⁶ It should be remembered that, at this date, recusants were theoretically debarred from holding public office. That Pearson was in his forties when he took the part of the sheriff is suggested in the records of recusants. When he was listed as a recusant in 1612 he was estimated to be forty. [*Cholmeley*, p. 240.] Although this was revised to '35' in 1613, it remains likely that he was nearing or just over forty when he took part in the 1615 play. [*Cholmeley*, p. 241.]

¹²⁷ The Brandsby drama may have been reported to the church courts not simply because the performance was staged on church property and on a Sunday, but because some of the non-recusant spectators (or local officials) believed that the performance did have a hidden and subversive Catholic agenda. This could also explain why the ecclesiastical authorities were keen to punish the players for their offence. However, it is also possible that the play was reported and addressed in the church courts because Pearson, one of the key players, was a servant of Richard Cholmeley, esquire. As a prominent Catholic the ecclesiastical and secular authorities were keen to keep a close eye upon the activities of men such as Cholmeley. Cholmeley also had a number of local enemies, who sporadically used his Catholicism to attack him. In both instances, policing and punishing the behaviour of Cholmeley's servants was one way of curbing and undermining his authority.

¹²⁸ This particular production was not staged in the church but it demonstrates that parish play producers were sometimes interested in performing contemporary secular dramas as well as traditional non-religious folk plays. [John Wasson, 'A Parish Play in the West Riding of Yorkshire', in *English Parish Drama*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Wim Hushen (Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996), 149-157 (pp. 150-51).]

mounted a play in 1560 each man agreed to contribute in some way to the preparations. For example, Mr. Holton was to 'buyldeth heaven'.¹²⁹

Some towns also sought professional help when mounting a parish play, hiring a man experienced in theatre and dramatic production to co-ordinate the performance, as noted in chapter one (p. 34). These 'shadowy figures in the wings of local drama [...] were often called "property players"' and were usually paid 'handsomely for their services'.¹³⁰ When Chelmsford organised a series of four Biblical plays in 1562 (one of which may have been performed in St Mary's, the local church) they employed a man called Burles as a 'property player'. His involvement in the performance preparations was 'extensive': 'he supervised the scaffold building and was personally responsible for such things as the ironwork on the hell stage. Other entries indicate that he had a hand in keeping the accounts, in designing scenery and ordering props.'¹³¹ Likewise, at New Romney in 1560 the church paid 'iiij li' to 'Gover M[ar]tyn o[u]r devysor for his s[er]uice at o[u]r playe'.¹³²

Financing Productions

In some cases parish plays were funded entirely by the church (e.g. St Mary's, Tewkesbury funded the three plays which were staged in the old abbey in 1600). On other occasions, church funding might be supplemented or replaced by donations from locals and neighbouring villages and towns. When New Romney's parishioners mounted a play in 1560, they received monetary gifts from a number of towns. The 'p[ar]iishe of Ivechurch' gave 'iij s iiijd' and 'xs' was received from the 'towne of Lydd toward[s] o[u]r playe'.¹³³

Similarly, some local church productions were initially financed by loans from wealthy members of the parish or town (e.g. the four parish plays staged at Chelmsford in 1562

¹²⁹ 'Records of Plays and Players in Kent, 1450-1642', ed. by Giles Dawson, Malone Society: Collections, VII (Oxford: Oxford University, 1965), p. 205.

¹³⁰ John C. Coldewey, ' "That Enterprising Property Player": Semi-Professional Drama in Sixteenth century England', *Theatre Notebook*, 31 (1977), 5-12 (p. 5).

References to 'property players' or 'devisers' are generally only found in relation to large-scale or more ambitious parish productions. They also appear to be a mainly south-eastern phenomenon. This may be because of the proximity of towns in this region to London and the centre of the professional theatre industry in London.

¹³¹ Coldewey, 'That Enterprising Property Player', p. 8.

¹³² Dawson, p. 208.

Such co-ordinators might also be responsible for publicizing performances. Parishes which did not employ a property player sometimes paid local people to publicize their production. As noted in chapter 3 (p. 153), university colleges occasionally sought the help of theatre professionals in similar fashion when organising large-scale or important productions.

¹³³ Dawson, p. 207.

were financed by nine 'prominent townsmen').¹³⁴ In these cases, the financiers would expect to be repaid from the monies raised at the performance(s), although at Chelmsford in 1562 the plays raised insufficient money to repay the funders, obliging the church to repay the townsmen from their own reserves.¹³⁵ The players of local church productions were usually parish amateurs and did not receive payment for playing. However, their efforts were not necessarily entirely unrewarded: they might receive food and drink at rehearsals and on the day of the performance (e.g. 'xxxs vjd' was spent at Tewkesbury in 1600 'for meate for the players').¹³⁶

Staging

The Place & Time of performances

Like performances by visiting troupes, local church productions might be staged inside the parish church or cathedral, as were the plays performed at Tewkesbury Abbey in 1600. (It is recorded in the Borough Minute Book that they were 'shewed in the abbey').¹³⁷ More often local church productions appear to have been staged in the church-yard (e.g. the Bungay parish play of 1566 was staged in the church-yard of Holy Trinity Church).

Open-air performances in churchyards were performed in the day, as one might expect, but afternoon and evening performances are recorded inside Elizabethan and Jacobean churches.¹³⁸ Sometimes the performance of plays was accompanied by, or formed one part of, other festivities, such as feasting and banqueting at a church-ale (e.g. when Tewkesbury staged their fund-raising plays in the abbey in 1600, their expenses included 'xl s' spent on '[i]j butte[s] [and halfe] of beare and brewing our malte', 'xvij s' for 'frutes and spices' and 'xij s viij d' for 'coockery').¹³⁹

¹³⁴ Coldewey, 'The Digby Plays', p. 103.

¹³⁵ Coldewey, 'The Digby Plays', p. 104.

¹³⁶ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 541.

¹³⁷ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 540.

As Greenfield notes, '“within the abbey” could mean anywhere within the abbey grounds rather than specifically within the church, the latter meaning is perhaps more likely, since at the dissolution the monastic buildings were demolished with the exception of the church.' [Peter H. Greenfield, 'Parish Drama in Four Counties Bordering the Thames Watershed', in *English Parish Drama*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Wim Hushen (Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996), 107-118 (pp. 117-8).]

¹³⁸ The performance at Stockbury parish church in 1600 was performed 'in the afternoone', while in 1614 Thomas Dawkyn was presented 'for makeing a plaie in the Church vpon St Stephens daye last at night' in Thurnby, Leicestershire. [Gibson, *REED: East Kent*, forthcoming. Leicestershire Record Office, 1 D41/ 13/ 37, fol. 47v.]

¹³⁹ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 541.

Casting and Rehearsal

The performers of local parish plays were generally members of the parish, a cast being agreed upon well in advance of the intended performance. The casting process might even be held 'in the church', as was the meeting at which New Romney's parishioners agreed upon the tasks that they were each to perform in preparation for their parish play in 1560.¹⁴⁰ Like their professional peers, parish performers sometimes assumed more than one role (e.g. in the 1614 Methley parish play 'Richard Dickonsonne' played 'both of the kings' parts').¹⁴¹

It was, likewise, usual for amateur church performers to rehearse together and to learn their parts. We know that the New Romney players rehearsed their 1560 parish production at least once in the church as 'vj d' was 'payd to Lawrance ffan for bere fett to ye church when the play was rehersed the xxxj th of m[ar]che'.¹⁴²

Staging

Local church performances (indoor or outdoor) were often mounted upon temporary wooden stages, usually referred to as 'scaffolds'.¹⁴³ These platforms could be of large proportions (particularly if set up outside), requiring the work of several men over a number of days. Edward Molle and his son were paid for four days of work upon the playing scaffold for Holy Trinity churchyard, Bungay in 1566.¹⁴⁴ Temporary tiring-houses or 'backing tents' were set up for some performances as well (costumes could be stored and actors could get dressed in these tents). At Sherborne in 1574 'xd' was paid to two men 'for theire Laboures yn setting vp of the backer tents for the players to array themselves yn'.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ Dawson, p. 205.

Whether a particular individual made the casting decisions or whether decisions were reached by parish consensus is generally unstated and may have varied between churches and productions.

¹⁴¹ Wasson, 'A Parish Play', p. 151.

¹⁴² Dawson, p. 207.

¹⁴³ When performing in the churchyard, the stage platform might be set up against a church wall (as at St Lawrence's in Reading in the early sixteenth century) or in an open area. [Alexandra F. Johnston, "'What Revels are in Hand?': Dramatic Activities Sponsored by the Parishes of the Thames Valley' in *English Parish Drama*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Wim Hushen (Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996), 95-104 (p. 98).]

¹⁴⁴ Wasson and Galloway, p. 143.

¹⁴⁵ Mills, p. 12.

As the provision of the latter indicates, local church productions were usually costumed. Churchwardens' accounts often contain a series of payments for their provision. Sometimes the payments are for the making or hire of playing clothes; in other instances, the payments are for the repair or renovation of existing garments. At Sherborne in 1573 'iij s' was paid 'to Paule raulens for mackynge of the players garment[s] and at Tewkesbury in 1600 'xx s' was paid 'for hier of apparell'.¹⁴⁶ Sometimes the costumes were hired from a neighbouring church. St Mary's church in Chelmsford lent its playing clothes to a number of town's players (e.g. Colchester, Billericay, Starford and Little Badow).¹⁴⁷ Occasionally, clothes were borrowed or supplied by private individuals as well (e.g. when the parishioners of Bungay mounted their production in Holy Trinity churchyard in 1566 'xx d' was spent 'at norwiche for expenc[s] when my lord of Surrey his apparell was borrowed for the Interlude'). Renovation work upon costumes is also recorded at Bungay in 1566, a payment being made 'to Oldale for staynyng certayn clothes for ye Interlude.'¹⁴⁸

As well as general items of male and female clothing, there are often records of costumes prepared for specific characters and of accessories such as beards, wigs and visors being purchased or made. For example, clothes were specially prepared for 'Sodom' at Sherborne in 1574, and 'xv s' was paid 'to William redcut for v[ea]ysages for the player[s]' in 1573. Similarly, 'iiij d' was paid 'to Holbrook for his visors', and 'ij d' was given to Bransby for 'dying heares for ye Interlude players' at Bungay in 1566.¹⁴⁹

Considerable expense might be lavished upon costumes and wardrobes of playing clothes could be large. Consequently, it is no surprise to find that some churches made careful provision for their secure storage during, and after, performances. At Sherborne, in 1573, the costumes were stored in a locked room, 'Nycolas Kove' being paid for 'mackynge of a keay for the doure where as you doo put the players garment[s] in'.¹⁵⁰

The use of props also appears to have been customary in local church productions. Payments for their preparation, hire or purchase are included alongside expenses on

¹⁴⁶ Mills, p. 10.

Douglas and Greenfield, p. 341.

¹⁴⁷ On occasion Chelmsford even hired out its costumes to professionals, such as the 'Earle of Sussex players' in 1570-1. [Pearson, pp. 420-1.]

¹⁴⁸ Wasson and Galloway, p. 143.

¹⁴⁹ Mills, p. 13, p. 10.

Wasson and Galloway, p. 143.

¹⁵⁰ Mills, p. 11.

costume in many churchwardens' accounts; and church inventories of playing gear often include items of stage furniture (e.g. the 1563 inventory of playing gear at St Mary's, Chelmsford, includes 'ij scalpes', 'ij daggers', 'iiij shepehoks' and 'iiij whyppes').¹⁵¹ Sometimes the producers of local church plays went to special lengths to procure the materials which they needed for props and other performance preparations (e.g. when New Romney's parishioners organised a play in 1560, the church accounts include a series of payments for items 'Bought at London for or playe', including 'ij li of glewe', 'ij li of redd leade' and 'ij ell[s] of bockeram').¹⁵²

Local church productions occasionally included special effects as well (e.g. the 'Gon powder' purchased from Mr Gowthe in Sherborne in 1576 was probably used for pyrotechnic effects included in the performance that year).¹⁵³ Likewise, music provided by church members or hired minstrels accompanied some parish performances (e.g. in 1573 a payment was made at Sherborne 'to him that dyd playe vpon the trumpite' at the play).¹⁵⁴

Audiences

The audiences for local church plays are likely to have been accommodated in the same way as spectators at productions by visiting performers. Hence, if a parish play was performed inside the local church (or cathedral) spectators might be accommodated in the nave and could be seated if forms or pews were available. Similarly, when parish productions were staged in the churchyard, as well as standing around the stage, spectators might sit upon the church leads. When Sherborne mounted their Corpus Christi play at the church in 1574 'ij s' was 'receaued of Thomas fuller for the ground yn in the churche yarde' and 'ijs xd' for 'standing vppon the leades'.¹⁵⁵ Occasionally, wooden scaffolds may have been erected as well.

Most of the spectators at amateur church productions are likely to have been parishioners of the host church, as was the case when performances were staged by visiting players (including men and women of all ages and social groups). Sometimes people were drawn from neighbouring villages and towns as well. A 'Mr harsar' apparently encouraged

¹⁵¹ Coldewey, 'The Digby Plays', p. 107.

¹⁵² Dawson, p. 209.

¹⁵³ Mills, p. 13.

¹⁵⁴ Mills, p. 11.

¹⁵⁵ Mills, p. 12.

neighbours to attend the interlude at Bungay churchyard in 1566, for reference is made to 'xvj li xiiij d' being collected 'at the church ale and game on Trynytie Sondaie [...] when Mr harsar dyd procure his neyburs of Beckyll[s] and other place[s] to come'.¹⁵⁶

III- CASE STUDIES

In the following section, a more detailed reconstruction of two specific church performances is offered. These case studies complement and illustrate the general account of church performances offered in part II. The performances to be discussed are the production of a *Susanna* play at St Breoke in 1557-8 and the 1593-4 performance by the Earl of Pembroke's Men at St Andrew's Church, Bewdley.¹⁵⁷

Susanna at St Breoke

In the sixteenth century, St Breoke was only a small 'moorland' village, but the parish, 'just south of Wadebridge', was large.¹⁵⁸ The sixteenth century churchwardens' accounts of the church only survive for some years.¹⁵⁹ As well as recording payments to dancers from 'Lydevan' (Ludgvan) [1565-6], 'gramputh' [1567-8] (Grampound), 'Sent Evall' (St Eval) [1574-5] and 'Sent fylleck' [1574-5] (Fyllock), the churchwardens rewarded 'the players of Robyn Hoode that came from St Cullombe the lower' (St Columb Minor) in 1590-1 and 'the Robyn hoode of Mawgan' in 1591-2.¹⁶⁰ The latter may have been payments for performances of Robin Hood plays.

The churchwardens' accounts include further evidence of dramatic activity. In 1566-7 the churchwardens paid 'iiij s iiij d' to 'enterlewd players of *Saint denys*', and in 1557-8 the accounts appear to allude to a performance of a *Susanna* play, a marginal note recording that 'Svsanna ys Playe'. The note appears alongside a record that 'Chrystoffer Rychard

¹⁵⁶ Wasson and Galloway, p. 143.

The inducement for people from surrounding communities to attend performances was perhaps even greater when these neighbours had sponsored or contributed to the play being performed.

¹⁵⁷ One of the reasons for choosing to look at these two performances is that they reflect different kinds of church performance, the first probably being an amateur production and the second, a professional performance.

¹⁵⁸ Jane A. Bakere, *The Cornish Ordinalia: A Critical Study* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1980), p. 19.

¹⁵⁹ Bakere, p. 19.

¹⁶⁰ Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, pp. 506-7.

made hys accounte & hath payed to the store clere' thirty-six shillings.¹⁶¹ No further details about the play are recorded. However, it is likely to have dramatised the Apocryphal Christian story of Susanna and the Elders.

Susanna's tale was 'an unusual and and interesting choice of biblical subject', for a play, few performances of 'Susanna' plays being recorded in early modern Britain.¹⁶² However, more than one play on the subject existed in the second half of the sixteenth century. Ralph Radcliffe, headmaster of Hitchin school in the 1550s, wrote a play for performance by his pupils (now lost) entitled the *Deliverance of Susanna from the Elders*.¹⁶³ Another lost play, of *Susanna's Tears*, recorded in play-lists of 1656 and 1661, is thought to have dated from the second half of the sixteenth century.¹⁶⁴

The only sixteenth century English *Susanna* play which survives is the one which was published in 1578 by Hugh Jackson (although its date of composition appears to have been much earlier in the Elizabethan period).¹⁶⁵ According to the title-page the 'Commodity of the Moste Vertuous and Godlye Susanna' was written by Thomas Garter, and the text of the play was tailored for use by acting companies. (As well as containing detailed staging

¹⁶¹ Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 506.

The proximity of the two references may mean that the money delivered up by Richard represented (or included) profits from the play performance. It also suggests that the play was sponsored by (and probably hosted at) the church, perhaps as a fund-raising event for the church.

¹⁶² Bakere, p. 19.

¹⁶³ Cited in Robert Clutterbuck, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Hertford*, III (London: John Bowyer Nichols, 1827), p. 21.

¹⁶⁴ Harbage lists the play in the Addenda for 1570. [*Annals of English Drama, 975-1700*, ed. by Alfred Harbage, revised by S. Schoenbaum, 3rd edition, revised by Sylvia Stoller Wagonheim (London: Methuen, 1964; repr. New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 42-3.]

¹⁶⁵ As B. Ifor Evans and W. W. Greg observe, in 1568-9, 'the following entry was made in the books of the Stationers' company: "R[eceived] of Thomas Colwell for his lycense for pryntinge of ye plays of Susanna iiiiij d". Six years earlier, 'about April or may 1563, Colwell had entered a batch of nine "ballets" including one "of the godly & constante wyse Susanna". Since the clerk's nomenclature is often loose it is possible that this may refer to the same piece.' [Thomas Garter, *The Commodity of the mosteVertuous and Godlye Susanna*, ed. by B. Ifor Evans and W. W. Greg (Oxford: Oxford University, 1937), p. v. (Hereafter all references to this play will be cited in the text.)] Whether 'Colwell ever printed' the play is uncertain. However, as Hugh Jackson, who printed Garter's play in 1578 married Colwell's wife, it is possible that the printed play was that mentioned in 1568-9 and 1563. [Evans and Greg, *Susanna*, p. v.] This places its date of composition in 1563 or ealier. Garter may have written the play and allowed it to be circulated in print as early as 1557-8, but there is no evidence that this was the case.

There is at least one later reference to an English acting company performing a *Susanna* play as well, but the performance was staged on the Continent and may have been a continental version of the tale. 'In September 1603, *Susanna* [...] was performed by English actors at Stuttgart.' [Harbage, 3rd edn, p. 214.]

directions, the play is prefaced by a proposed casting scheme on its title-page. According to these directions 'Eyght persons may easily play it'.¹⁶⁶

As Radcliffe's play was in Latin and unavailable in print, it is unlikely that the play performed at St Breoke was based upon his text. It is perhaps equally unlikely that the *Susanna* played at the church was either *Susanna's Tears* or Garter's play as neither text is thought to have been written before 1557-8 and they were not available in print at this date even if they had been written. The Breoke *Susanna* may have been specially written for the occasion by a local parishioner using the Apocrypha or another version of the tale (e.g. a ballad) as his/ her guide.¹⁶⁷

However, the St Breoke *Susanna* is likely to have required a similar cast to the other plays including *Susanna*, her husband, two elders, and Daniel. Like Garter's play, the Cornish production is likely to have included additional characters such as *Susanna's* parents (Chelcias and his wife), *Susanna's* maids, and a number of people as members of the crowd which gather for her trial.¹⁶⁸ The Breoke play is also likely to have dramatised similar episodes from the *Susanna* story (such as the Elders spying upon *Susanna* in the garden, the confrontation between *Susanna* and the Elders, her trial, *Susanna's* deliverance, through the intervention of Daniel, and the execution of the the Elders), posing staging demands akin to those of Garter's text.

¹⁶⁶ The scene in which Ioachim prays before the two Elders provides detailed stage directions for the Elders: 'Sensuality and Voluptas sitteth downe at a Table turning of the bokes, and Ioachim kneeling on his knees sayeth' (*Susanna*, 330). [No act and scene divisions are included in the original text. References therefore relate to line numbers only.]

The following cast is suggested in the preface to the play:

1. The Prologue and the Gaylour for one,
2. Joachim and Judex for another,
3. Sathan and Voluptas for another,
4. Sensualitas alone,
5. *Susanna* alone,
6. Helchia, True Report, Ancilla, another,
7. Ill reporte the Vyce, and Cryer, another,
8. Helchias wyfe, Danyell, Seruus, Serua, for another.

[*Susanna*, pp. vi-vii.]

¹⁶⁷ One of the most popular ballads in sixteenth century Europe was apparently called 'Suzanne un jour'. [Information provided by Dr Peter Davidson.] There may have been an English version (or versions) of the ballad with which people in St Breoke might have been familiar.

¹⁶⁸ It is perhaps also possible that the play included Satan (and / or a Vice), as does *The Moste Vertuous and Godlye Susanna*.

SOME DIAGRAMS
EXCLUDED ON
INSTRUCTION FROM
THE UNIVERSITY

The performance

Organisation and Location

As the production was apparently church-sponsored and no reference is made to its performance by visiting players, it is likely to have been a native parish production, performed and organised by parishioners with the assistance of the churchwardens. As Garter's text demonstrates, the cast need not have been large, even if the play did incorporate minor characters such as Susanna's parents.¹⁶⁹

The location of the play's performance is not explicitly recorded, but, like most church productions, it is likely to have been staged either in the church or churchyard. Both spaces are available for contemporary inspection, as the church survives (although there have been some alterations since the sixteenth century). The church dates back to the thirteenth century but was 'substantially enlarged' in the fifteenth century and 'extensively rebuilt' in 1677. (It was dedicated to St Briocus on 24th September, 1259).¹⁷⁰ In its general dimensions, the church has changed little, however, since the sixteenth century, as is apparent if plans of the church are consulted (see plate 46).

Although the roof of the church is 'low', the interior would not have been too cramped for performance use. At its longest point, the main body of the church measures approximately 99 feet and is c. 13 feet at its widest point.¹⁷¹ Ample room was available for the erection of a stage (if desired) and the accommodation of a reasonably large audience, even if the players were not using the full extent of the church. There does not appear to have been a screen, therefore, the players could have made use of the full length of the church if performing inside. They could have performed at the upper end of the church (in between the two aisles), accommodating the audience in the nave. Some seating might have been available, although it may have been limited in quantity as in 1565 'the young men of St. Breoke' collected three pounds, fifteen shillings and ten pence 'for new seats in the Church'.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Local drama was usually performed by men only (although women were sometimes involved in may games and pageants).

¹⁷⁰ 'A Brief History and Guide to the Parish Church of St. Breoke' (undated pamphlet, published by the church), p. 1. The pamphlet was supplied by the Reverend Brian A. Anderson, rural Dean of the Parish of St Breoke and Egloshayle in Wadebridge. Hereafter the pamphlet will be cited as 'St. Breoke'.

¹⁷¹ 'St. Breoke', p. 2.

¹⁷² 'St. Breoke', p. 1.



Plate 47: (a) Exterior view of St Breoke Parish Church
[Author's own photograph]



Plate 47: (b) View of the North side of St. Breoke church, showing the stream which runs through the churchyard
[Photograph by David Morley]

The size of the churchyard also appears to have changed little since the sixteenth century but it is no longer the open space it is likely to have been then. On either side of the church the churchyard slopes upwards. On the south side the hillside rises steeply within a few feet of the church. It is therefore unlikely that enough level room was available for use as a playing area. On the north side, there is more level ground between the church and the hillside, although a stream runs through this area. If the St Breoke players chose to perform on this side of the church, a wooden platform could have been erected as a stage next to the church wall, the hillside forming a natural arena for the spectators [see plates 47 & 48]. The players might also have considered performing at the end of the church next to the tower [see plate 48]. Here, too, they would have found level ground, but less space would have been available for spectators, the tower standing in close proximity to the church-yard wall. If the performance was staged in the churchyard, most of the spectators are likely to have stood around the stage or playing area.¹⁷³

The audience is likely to have consisted primarily of villagers from St Breoke, although it is possible that people travelled to see the performance from elsewhere in the parish as well. Spectators may also have been attracted from neighbouring villages and towns, particularly if the players read 'banns' for the play in near-by communities.

Playing Gear

With a cast of at least five main characters (and probably a number of other minor characters), a variety of costumes would have been required for the Breoke performance. Not all of the costumes need have been particularly distinctive, or even 'play clothes.' If the play featured servants, for example, as does Garter's text, the actors playing these roles could have worn items which they had borrowed from fellow parishioners or drawn from their own wardrobes. Likewise, if the characters of Susanna's parents (Chelcias and his wife) were included they would only need to have been distinguishable as an ageing man and woman.¹⁷⁴

Garter's play is more specific about the costuming of the Elders, indirectly calling for them to wear red gowns. [Ill report alludes to the 'bloody gowne' of Sensuality (*Susanna*, 529).] The Breoke Elders may have been similarly attired. This would have identified them,

¹⁷³ The brevity of the churchwarden's reference to the play suggests that the play was a small-scale production and did not involve lavish staging preparations. It is, therefore, unlikely that wooden scaffolds would have been erected for the audience.

¹⁷⁴ The man playing Susanna's mother could have borrowed a dress and worn a wig of grey hair; her father's player may have worn a grey wig as well.



Plate 48: (a) View from the North side of St. Breoke church, looking over the stream and the hill-side graveyard
[Photograph by David Morley]



Plate 48: (b) View of the tower of St. Breoke church
[Author's own photograph]

symbolically, as lustful characters, red being the colour traditionally associated with sensuality in medieval and early modern colour symbolism. In *The Moste Vertuous and Godlye Susanna* the only specification with regards to Susanna's dress is that she appear veiled when arriving at the court session. The Elders ask that she be uncovered and the Judge orders the Bayly to 'Discouer her face' (*Susanna*, 997). The Breoke *Susanna* was probably veiled in similar fashion for the trial scene, as this is a detail included in the Apocryphal account of the tale.¹⁷⁵ In addition, she would have been expected to wear a dress and her performer might have worn a wig to give the illusion of having long hair.¹⁷⁶ The actor playing Daniel's part could have been dressed in everyday clothes, as in the Apocryphal account of the tale, he is simply a devout young man.¹⁷⁷

Most of the props required for the play's performance were probably small and easily obtained (e.g. they might have used one or two chairs for the trial scene). However, a performance of the *Susanna* story does potentially require one larger item of stage furniture. The garden (or orchard) in which she bathes is supposed to be walled and fitted with a door. When *Susanna*'s maids leave her in the orchard in Garter's play the stage directions state that they 'go out and shut the orchard dore' (*Susanna*, 701). Likewise, when *Susanna* calls out for help the text calls for 'two seruantes of the house' to 'run out, and breake open the Orchard dore, and asketh what is the matter' (*Susanna*, 773). Commenting on professional performances of this *Susanna* play, Craik suggests that, 'the action of' the play 'is intelligible only if we imagine an acting an area bisected by a partition which runs from the front to the back. This is the orchard wall'.¹⁷⁸

The Breoke players may not have attempted such an ambitious piece of staging in their production. Indeed, the audience may have had to imagine the garden wall and door. However, if they did choose to represent the walled garden, the prop wall might have been

¹⁷⁵ 'And these wicked men commanded her to vncover her face (for she was couered) that they might be filled with her beautie.' [*The Authorized Version of the Holy Bible* (1611), ed. by Alfred W. Pollard (Oxford: Oxford University, 1911), Apocrypha, *Susanna*, 32.]

¹⁷⁶ As the heroine, the players might also have chosen to dress *Susanna* more finely than the other female characters (possibly borrowing a dress from a wealthier lady in the parish). Equally, they might have chosen to dress her simply or in white, as a symbolic reflection of her purity and innocence.

¹⁷⁷ If, like Garter's play, the Cornish production included Satan and his vice the performers might have drawn upon traditional costuming conventions. For Satan this might have involved making a costume of 'leather skins, [...] or a hairy pelt, or [...] feathers'. [T. W. Craik, *The Tudor Interlude: Stage, Costume, and Acting*, 3rd edn (Leicester: Leicester University, 1958; repr. 1967), p. 50.] The Vice would usually appear in a coat and with a wooden dagger. (The costume inventory at St Mary's, Chelmsford in 1563 listed together 'ij vyces coates, and ij scalpes, ij daggers (one dagger wanted)'. [Pearson, p. 414.])

¹⁷⁸ Craik, p. 17.

simpler (e.g. a lathe board painted to look like a wall) and need not have spanned the whole playing area. Similarly, the door could have been represented by a gap or a board gate. The pool in which she bathes may also have been represented by a prop (e.g. a tub).

Striking Scenes

The concluding episode of the story, in which Susanna is delivered from wrongful punishment as a result of Daniel's intervention and the Elders are sentenced to death, is potentially one of the most dramatic and demanding scenes to stage. It implicitly calls for a large cast (including Susanna, the Elders, Daniel, and a crowd), and, potentially requires the staging of an execution. No special representation of the court (used for Susanna's trial) would have been necessary, although chairs might have been provided for the Elders to sit upon while questioning the heroine (e.g. the Apocryphal version of the tale does not describe the setting). However, if the Breoke performers chose to borrow from medieval symbolic traditions, they might have placed the evil Elders stage-left (the left being associated with the sinister and the conventional location of hell in medieval plays), and placed the virtuous heroine stage-right (the conventional location of heaven).¹⁷⁹

Susanna's player would probably have appeared veiled, removing her covering at the Elders' command. As in Garter's play, the actors playing the Elders' parts might have conferred aside about their desire to see her face before issuing their command. (In Garter's play the directions state that Voluptas, one of the Elders, 'shall seeme to whisper in the others eare'.) In keeping with the Apocryphal account of the trial Susanna's player is also likely to have made a moving speech protesting her innocence and calling for God's assistance.¹⁸⁰

The staging of Daniel's intercession would have provided the Breoke players with an opportunity to generate dramatic suspense and to surprise their audience. In the

Apocryphal account of the tale Daniel protests as Susanna is being led to execution:

'Therefore when she was led to be put death: the lord raised vp the holy spirit of a young

¹⁷⁹ Parker describes how, according to 'medieval stage symbolism', stage-left was 'the traditional "sinister" location of hell-mouth', while stage-right was conventionally the location for 'heaven'. [R. B. Parker, 'The Themes and Staging of *Bartholomew Fair*', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 39 (1970), 293-309 (p. 294).]

¹⁸⁰ 'Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice and said: O euerlasting God that knowest the secrets, and knowest all things before they be: Thou knowest that they haue borne false witnesse against me, / and behold I must die: whereas I neuer did such things, as these men haue maliciously inuented against me.' [The Bible, Apocrypha, Susanna, 42-3.]

youth, whose name was Daniel'.¹⁸¹ In the Breoke *Susanna* greater tension could have been created by allowing the preparations for her execution to begin before his intervention. Similarly, his protest on her behalf might have been rendered more striking if the actor was part of an on-stage audience, stepping forward to speak out from their midst, or if he emerged from the real audience, giving the illusion that he was one of the spectators.

Daniel's exposure of the Elders' deceit precipitates their sentencing and execution. If included on-stage, as in Garter's play, the execution of the Elders was probably one of the most theatrically challenging moments in the Cornish production. In the Apocryphal account the manner of the execution is not specified, but it is possible that the Breoke players chose to have the Elders stoned, as occurs in *The Moste Vertuous and Godlye Susanna*. That the stoning is to be performed on-stage in Garter's play is made explicit in the stage-directions:

Here they stone them, and the vyce lets a stone fall on the Baylie foote,
and fall together by the eares, and when the Iudges are
deade, the Vyce putteth on one of their
Gownes. (*Susanna*, 1251.)

If this method of execution was chosen and the deaths were shown on-stage, it is unlikely that real stones were used, and the Elders may have been placed at the rear of the stage (or playing area) where they could be partially obscured from the audience's view during the execution. This would have allowed the actors throwing the stones to miss the men playing the Elders with most of their shots. Staged with convincing violence the Elders' execution could have served as a stark warning about the ill ends of evil doers.

The Apocryphal *Susanna* ends with the prayers and thanks giving of Susanna's family: 'Therefore Chelcias and his wife praised God for their daughter Susanna, with Ioacim her husband, and all the kinred: because there was no dishonestie found in her.'¹⁸² The Breoke performance is likely to have closed in similar fashion, although, as in Garter's play, the audience may have been invited to join in additional prayers for the monarch and for themselves as well.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Bible, Apocrypha, *Susanna*, 45.

¹⁸² Bible, Apocrypha, *Susanna*, 63.

¹⁸³ In Garter's *Susanna*, Ioachim offers a prayer for the Queen and Susanna prays for the audience.

The Earl of Pembroke's Players at Bewdley, 1593-4

The second performance to be discussed took place in 1593-4 at St Andrew's church, Bewdley and was given by the Earl of Pembroke's company. They were paid 'xx s' as 'my Lord President his players'.¹⁸⁴ Formed some time in 1591, the company which visited Bewdley had enjoyed considerable success, becoming one of the leading professional troupes in a short space of time, as noted in chapter one:

Besides performing at least four of Shakespeare's plays and having Marlowe's *Edward II* written for them, Pembroke's were good enough in their earliest years to almost match Strange's at court in their very first season, with two performances to the other company's three.¹⁸⁵

They returned to London specially for the Court performances (on 26 December, 1592 and 6 January, 1593), interrupting the tour of the provinces which they had begun sometime in autumn, 1592.

After Christmas the troupe returned to the provinces and continued their tour. 1593 was not to prove an equally fortunate year. Within nine months of their invitation to perform before the Queen, the company were bankrupt and obliged to abandon their tour.¹⁸⁶ The production at Bewdley may have been one of their last performances.¹⁸⁷ It is probably no coincidence that a number of plays 'that the company had performed according to their

Ioachim. Also good Lorde amongst thy giftes, which every day are seene,
We have to prayse thy mighty grace, for our most noble Queene.
Defende her Lorde in all assayes, giue passage to thy word.
And cut them short that will her wo.
[...]

Susanna. And for this company gathered here, doe I my prayer make,
God graunt them their lyfe in quietnes, and then their soules do take.
(*Susanna*, 1433, 1441).

¹⁸⁴ Klausner, p. 362.

¹⁸⁵ Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), pp. 271-2. There is an earlier record of an Elizabethan Pembroke's company, in 1575-6 in 'a single entry by the Canterbury officials'; but 'there is no record of any further life in this group'. [Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 267.]

¹⁸⁶ Henslowe wrote to Edward Alleyn about the failure of the troupe's tour. [See David George, 'Shakespeare and Pembroke's Men', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 32 (1981), 305-323 (p. 306).]

¹⁸⁷ Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 267.

In the churchwardens' accounts the payment to the company occurs under 1593-4, and, therefore, could refer to a performance in 1594 by a reformed Pembroke's troupe. However, other evidence indicates that the performance pre-dates the company's dissolution. No other references to a reformed Pembroke's company occur before 1595.

title-pages were printed in 1593-4', as indicated in chapter two (p. 75). Selling their plays was one way of recouping their losses. By implication, *Edward II*, *The Taming of a Shrew*, *Titus Andronicus* and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* were part of the company's 1593 tour repertory.¹⁸⁸

The title of the play performed by the troupe at St Andrew's church in Bewdley is not recorded, but is likely to have been drawn from the repertory which included these plays. Unfortunately, there is no additional evidence (of the kind relating to the troupe's Bath guild hall performance) which might identify the particular play chosen on this occasion. Similar staging questions would have been raised, however, whichever play was performed and a hypothetical reconstruction of any one can afford an insight into the way in which professional troupes might make use of churches as playing spaces.

In this instance, I shall consider how the company might have performed *The Taming of a Shrew*.¹⁸⁹ Although there is no positive evidence that this was the play performed, it would have been one of the plays more readily staged had the company's financial difficulties caused them to shed some of the hired men in the company before they reached Bewdley. *A Shrew* could be easily performed by fifteen players, whereas performing the history plays in the troupe's repertory with only fifteen players was potentially very demanding (see appendix ix for a cast list for *A Shrew*). A church performance of the play could have been particularly piquant in a number of ways as well.¹⁹⁰ Before considering the staging of

¹⁸⁸ Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 269.

¹⁸⁹ *A Pleasant Conceited Historie, called The Taming of a Shrew*, ed. by Graham Holderness and Bryan Loughrey (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992). Hereafter all references to the play will be cited in the text. As the play text is not divided into acts and scenes, and the lines are unnumbered, reference will only be made to page numbers in the Holderness / Loughrey edition.

¹⁹⁰ In its comic lessons upon female obedience and domestic relations the play offers a striking echo of homiletic pronouncements and instructions on these subjects with which the Bewdley parishioners would probably be familiar from church services. [In the 'Sermon on the State of Matrimony', for example, wives are lectured upon their duty to their husbands, much in the way that Kate lectures the other wives about the 'dutie' they owe their partners at the end of the play: 'Now as concerning the wife's duty. What shall become of her? Shall she abuse the gentleness and humanity of her husband, and at her pleasure turn all things upside down? no surely; for that is far repugnant against God's commandment. For thus doth St. Peter preach to them: *Ye wives, be ye in subjection to obey your own husbands*. To obey is another thing than to control or command; which yet they may do to their children and to their family; but as for their husbands, them must they obey, and cease from commanding, and perform subjection. For this doth surely nourish concord very much'. [*The Two Books of Homilies appointed to be read in Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University, MDCCCLIX), p. 504].

The play also includes church-related allusions. Katherine, for example, threatens to set her 'ten commandments' in Ferando's face (*A Shrew*, p. 52). Although she is threatening to hit him with both fists (i.e. her ten fingers), a punning reference is also made to the biblical 'Ten commandments'. This allusion could have been especially amusing if Bewdley's chapel contained a plaque of the ten biblical commandments as was required. ['Queen Elizabeth's letter to the

the play, I wish to place the performance in context, historically and physically; and, therefore, shall consider why the Earl of Pembroke's Men were performing at Bewdley and what kind of playing space St Andrew's church would have afforded.

The Earl of Pembroke's Men visit Bewdley

The Worcestershire town of Bewdley lies on the county's border with Shropshire. This boundary 'was not settled' until '1544 and jurisdictional uncertainties made Bewdley a haven for fugitives'.¹⁹¹ For geographical reasons, the town was an important trading point as well: 'Goods were brought to Bewdley by land from all over the Midlands to go on to Bristol by boat. It was also a major crossing place. The river was fordable near Bewdley [...] [and] the town became far more important after the building of its bridge in 1447.'¹⁹²

However, in the sixteenth century, Bewdley was most famous for its proximity to the 'royal palace of Tickenhill' and for its frequent hosting of 'the meetings of the Council in the Marches'.¹⁹³ The Council was a powerful body, and its President was an influential man in the Marches. In 1593, the Earl of Pembroke presided over the Council. That his troupe should choose to visit one of the towns where his name was most familiar and most prestigious during their 1592-3 tour is unlikely to have been coincidental. It may have been their chief motive for visiting Bewdley. With the Lord of the Council as their patron they probably hoped to secure generous rewards.¹⁹⁴ Equally, it is possible that they were responding to their patron's wishes. As President of the Council, he may have been keen

commissioners for causes ecclesiastical of 22nd January, 1560-1, orders that "the tables of the commandments be comlye set or hung up in the east end of the chancell". (Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 236.)] Similarly, Sander's teasing remark that Kate will 'make' Ferando 'one of the head men of the parish' (*A Shrew*, p. 54) may have gained comic resonancy when spoken in a parish church before some of the 'head men' of Bewdley's parish. The play's implicitly didactic agenda could have lent it to church performance as well, a moralistic play (even of lighthearted tone) perhaps seeming particularly appropriate for performance in a church.

¹⁹¹ Klausner, p. 298.

¹⁹² Klausner, pp. 298-9.

¹⁹³ Klausner, p. 299.

The Council of the Marches was set up 'after the death of Prince Arthur', King Henry VII's eldest son. The men elected were generally 'eminent' and their role was 'to administer justice within the 'Marches' or border-land between England and Wales. The exact limit of their jurisdiction is not very clearly defined; and [...] disputes about it were of common occurrence'. [J. R. Burton, *A History of Bewdley* (London: William Reeves, 1883), pp. 35-6.] The 'town specially fixed for the sitting of the Court in winter time' was Ludlow; but the Palace of Tickenhill 'was kept up for the use of the Lords President, and from various sources we learn that the Court must have been held here nearly every summer.' [Burton, p. 36.]

¹⁹⁴ Notably, the troupe were paid as the Lord President's Players by St Andrew's wardens, rather than as the Earl of Pembroke's Men.

for his name and status to be well publicized in Marcher towns. Visits by his acting company provided a way of demonstrating and reinforcing his power as Lord President.¹⁹⁵

The arrival of the players

Pembroke's Men probably announced their arrival in Bewdley in customary fashion, sounding drums and trumpets as they walked through the town, and possibly wearing their patron's livery to lend their entry more prestige.¹⁹⁶ At this point, it would have been usual to present themselves to the local mayor or his equivalent, to seek licence to perform in the town. In Bewdley in 1593-4 this would have meant presenting themselves to the town's Justice or Bailiff.¹⁹⁷

Licence secured, the company needed to find a performance venue. St Andrew's church may have been the public town building which best lent itself to playing.¹⁹⁸ As well as affording an indoor space, it was located in the town centre.¹⁹⁹ The fact that the chapel appears to have been built over or adjacent to a tavern may have made it additionally attractive as a playing venue. In 1596, 'xvi d' was paid 'for a Planke to mend the hole out of the Chauncell into Mersour Tavarn'.²⁰⁰ Not only might players hope to attract and satisfy spectators with the promise of being able to drink before, after and, perhaps even during, a performance; but, the customers at the tavern were a potential audience.

¹⁹⁵ If the visit to Bewdley was paid in the summer, it is possible that the troupe's visit was intended to coincide with the sitting of the Council of the Marches at the town. Their patron might have wished to entertain and impress his fellow councillors and therefore requested that they visit. If the visit was made at the players' initiative, they may have expected their patron's name to secure particularly generous rewards at this time in the town. They may also have hoped to perform before the Council.

¹⁹⁶ The troupe may have entered the town via its renowned bridge, which Leland described in 1539 as 'a goodlye fayre bridge [...] of [five] great Arches of Stone'. [Cited in Burton, p. 11.] The town was not extensive in size and it is possible that the troupe perambulated each of the main streets announcing their arrival. In 1539 there were three main roads in the town. By 1593 this figure had probably changed little. [Burton, p. 12.]

¹⁹⁷ Elizabethan Bewdley was the responsibility of a bailiff and a justice, chosen out of twelve aldermen. Not until 1605 was the town 'reincorporated under a government of bailiff and burgesses'. [Klausner, p. 299.]

¹⁹⁸ Town halls appear to have been the first choice of playing venue for most professional companies in provincial towns, but Bewdley did not possess a civic hall at this date.

¹⁹⁹ St Andrew's was reputedly situated 'at the foot of the bridge' in the town centre. [Peter Johnson and David Thomas, 'Bewdley's Buried Treasure' (Kidderminster: Telford Press, publication date unknown), p. 24.] There was another church in the town, St Leonard's church, but it was 'situated at Ribbesford (known as Ripley)', not in the town centre. [Johnson and Thomas, p. 24.]

²⁰⁰ Burton reports in his *History of Bewdley* that a Mrs Holl 'told Dr Prattinson in 1808 that there were houses under the chancel.' The tavern could therefore have been underneath or next to the Church. [Burton, p. 17.]

Notably, the Earl of Pembroke's Men were not the only company who performed at the church in the Elizabethan period: 'plaiers' were rewarded 'xvj d' in 1570-1, the 'quenes plaiers' received 'vj s viii d' in 1571-2, and 'my lorde of lesters pleyars' were rewarded with 'vij s' in 1573-4.²⁰¹ A later Lord Pembroke's troupe also visited the church in 1598-9 (receiving 'x s'); and 'mie lordes players' received 'xx s' in 1615-6.²⁰²

The Earl's Men may have had a further reason for offering their services to the St Andrew's wardens, the town-centre chapel having a connection with the Lord President. As Peter Johnson and David Thomas note, 'one of the chapel's chantries' was 'set aside for the use of the Lord President of the Marches and his council'.²⁰³ This same connection might have encouraged the churchwardens of St Andrew's to accept the services of the company.²⁰⁴

The Performance

The Place

While the records are not explicit, the company must have performed inside St Andrew's, as the church was not set within a churchyard: 'houses were built close up to it nearly all round'.²⁰⁵ The church, which no longer survives, is believed to have been 'situated at the foot of the [town] bridge', and was the 'chief chapel' in the town centre. It was built 'about the time of Henry VI of timber structure' and was divided into a nave and chancel.²⁰⁶ It

²⁰¹ Klausner, pp. 361-3.

²⁰² Klausner, p. 363.

This is probably a reference to the acting company patronised by Pembroke's successor as Lord President, Lord Eure. Eure was president from 1606-17. [Klausner, p. 583.]

²⁰³ Johnson and Thomas, p. 25.

²⁰⁴ The negotiations between the players and the churchwardens may have been held at the church. It is also possible that the troupe were offered some form of hospitality (e.g. refreshments) at the church or at the neighbouring tavern. The wardens are known to have entertained other guests: for example, when the Bishop of the diocese visited the town in the same years he was given a 'gallon of beer', costing '4 d'. [Johnson and Thomas, p. 25.]

²⁰⁵ Burton, p. 17.

²⁰⁶ Burton, p. 16.

Johnson and Thomas, p. 24.

The church no longer survives: 'In 1745 the old chapel was pulled down and replaced by a stone church costing £2, 200. The dedication was changed to St. Anne'. [Johnson and Thomas, p. 25.] It is not clear whether the nave and chancel were divided by a screen at this date. There is evidence of a gallery at a later date which may have been above a screen, but we cannot be sure that this gallery existed in 1593 (e.g. in 1634 money was spent upon 'inlarding the galerye'). [Burton, p. xxix.] The precise dimensions of the church are not known either. The chapel may not have been of large proportions, but was obviously able to accommodate a congregation and was considered commodious enough for play performances to be staged within it. When Richard Baxter described the debate between himself and John Tombes about infant baptism which took place in the same chapel in 1648, he spoke of them arguing before a 'crowded congregation', implying that an audience of some size was accommodated. [Burton, p. 23.]

also contained three chantries. 'The chantry of St. Mary was on the south side of the chancel and of the same length with it. [...] On the North side of the chancel were two other chantries: one of St. Anne [...], and the other of the Holy Trinity. [...] Between the two chantries on the north side of the chancel went up a flight of steps from the street into the chancel'.²⁰⁷

Inside, the chapel was whitewashed and glazed, and the players would have been able to see 'the arms of the Corporation'.²⁰⁸ They would also have found an organ and a number of seats, including one for the Council. (In 1570 payment was made for '2 1/2 yards of greene cotton to cover the Seate where the Counsaill sitteth.')²⁰⁹ The company may have been warned to avoid damaging the newly-tiled floor. In 1592 the 'bare-earth floor' was 'replaced with tiles, 4,000 being brought from Bristol'.²¹⁰

Preparing the Space

Like other professional, touring companies, Pembroke's Men are likely to have performed upon a stage at St Andrew's.²¹¹ The temporary wooden platform was probably set up at the upper end of the nave, although they may have chosen to perform at the lower end of the nave, if the spectators entered from the stairs into the chancel.²¹² The audience could have been accommodated in the remainder of the nave.

Playing Gear

As professional companies customarily travelled with a stock of playing gear (including assorted costumes and props) it is fairly safe to assume that the Bewdley performance was staged in costume and with the accompaniment of stage furniture.²¹³ Larger items of stage

²⁰⁷ Burton, p. 17.

²⁰⁸ In 1579 'xx d' was paid for 'two daies work to whitelime the chappell', while in 1574 'Henry Glashyer' was paid for 'glasinge the chappell'. [Burton, p. xiv, p. xiii.] [Johnson and Thomas, p. 25.]

²⁰⁹ The chapel was fitted with an organ as early as 1585, as 'fyve skins for mending of the Organ' were bought in this year. [Burton, p. xiv, p. xii.] Seat rents are first noted in 1583 when a payment was received for 'half yeres rent for setes in the chapel [Seven at 2s 6d. and three at 2s].' [Burton, p. xiv.] The seat for the Council probably refers to the Council of the Marches.

²¹⁰ Johnson and Thomas, p. 25.

²¹¹ The stage may have been the troupe's own and carried with them from venue to venue.

²¹² The stage might have been curtained at the rear and around its base, to screen the area behind the platform. This area would then have been available for use as a tiring space, although the company may have preferred to use one of the chantry areas as their dressing space.

²¹³ The play proper is nominally set in Athens and its environs, but internal allusions to the clothing of characters indicate that they were not expected to be attired in Greek or classical fashions, but were imagined in contemporary English dress. For example, the clothes which Ferando wears when 'baselie attired' are items of Elizabethan fashion. He wears a jerkin and 'canvas breeches downe to the / Small of his legge' (*A Shrew*, p. 61). The dress which is brought to Ferando's house for Kate is

furniture (such as chairs and tables) and additional smaller props may have been borrowed or bought on-site. [For example, the bread and wine required for Slie's banquet and Ferando's meat in *A Shrew* (p.47, p.70) could have been purchased (or solicited from their hosts) in Bewdley, and in the other provincial towns which they visited.]²¹⁴

The play does not require any elaborate sound effects but does call for trumpeting (e.g. *A Shrew*, p. 48) and 'musick' (e.g. *A Shrew*, p. 46). Most travelling troupes owned their own trumpets, using them to announce their arrival in new towns and to herald the commencement of performances. There is no reason to think that Pembroke's Men were an exception. Providing fanfares in plays such as *A Shrew* would not have been difficult, therefore. They are also likely to have owned a lute (as one is required for *A Shrew*) and drums which would have been available for use in providing music in performances. The company may have included musically skilled men, although local musicians could have been hired to provide the music for their performances on tour. If Bewdley musicians were

even more obviously of contemporary fashion. The tailor describes how he was ordered to make 'a loose bodied gowne' with 'truncke' sleeves and 'a faire round compast cape' (*A Shrew*, p. 67). Similarly, Ferando complains about the 'cuts and jagges' in the gown, a common feature of fashionable Elizabethan dresses (*A Shrew*, p. 74). Contemporary dress is implicitly called for in the induction as well.

A variety of contemporary garments is required, including dresses for the female characters, rich men's clothes (for characters such as Slie when he is a mock lord, the Duke of Cestus, Aurelius and the Lord), cloaks and boots (e.g. for the Lord and his men), and humbler garments (such as the 'blew coat' of Sander, Ferando's servant and for Slie before his transformation into a Lord). Explicitly old, poor quality clothing is required for Ferando's wedding outfit (as indicated above). The boots and cloaks called for in the play and the humbler items of clothing might have been the players' own. However, there is evidence that the troupe also carried a stock of assorted costumes with them, probably including finer garments and dresses. [Henslowe's remarks about the company having to 'pawn' their costumes when they became bankrupt indicate that the troupe had been travelling with a wardrobe of playing clothes. (Cited in George, 'Shakespeare and Pembroke's Men', p. 306.)] Some of the players may have owned playing clothes of their own as well which they might use or lend to their fellows. The church does not appear to have owned any playing clothes which could be borrowed.

Most of the props required for *A Shrew* are small and simple (for instance, 'packs' for the players [p. 45], a stick [p. 64], money [pp. 64-5], and a dagger [p. 70]). The packs used might have been the players' own. The troupe might also have used real money and a real stick. Ferando's dagger might also have been real, belonging to one of the troupe. However, imitation and real weapons were often included in prop stocks. The play does call for a few larger pieces of stage furniture (for example, one or two tables and one or more chairs). Although these could have been carried in the company's touring stock, it is more likely that they expected to borrow such furniture from their hosts when on tour. The one more unusual prop required for the play is the lute (*A Shrew*, p. 58). The players could not count on being able to borrow such an instrument for every touring performance. If they wanted to include it in their performances of *A Shrew* they probably needed to carry their own lute with them. However, as well as being useful as a prop for the play, the lute could have been used to provide musical accompaniment (and sound effects) for performances.

²¹⁴ In Bewdley, the wine and food could probably have been obtained from the neighbouring tavern.

hired they might have been set behind the stage (in the chancel), where they would be audible but not visually conspicuous, or upon the gallery (if it was in place in 1593).²¹⁵

Audience

As the players of the Lord President, the troupe are likely to have drawn a reasonably large and socially-mixed audience.²¹⁶ Most of the spectators were probably from Bewdley (perhaps including the town's important civic officials, such as the bailiff, justice and the twelve aldermen), although the audience could also have included people from neighbouring areas and visitors to the town, such as tradesmen and merchants (who were in the town to transport or collect goods). The body of spectators might have included a more prestigious group of visitors as well. If the Council of the Marches was at Bewdley, it is possible that the Lord President and his fellow councillors attended the performance.

If the councillors and the Lord President attended the play, it is likely that the seating nearest to the stage was reserved for them. (They may have sat upon the 'Council Seat' mentioned in 1570).²¹⁷ The town's important civic officers and the church's incumbent could also expect to be seated in the more prestigious area nearer to the stage.²¹⁸ The accommodation of the remaining spectators may have been random, although it is possible that those people who rented seats for church services expected to be able to use them for play performances as well.²¹⁹

Conclusion

As the evidence accumulated in this chapter makes clear, ecclesiastical buildings were a traditional and popular venue for dramatic performances in the provinces of early modern England. Indeed, even in the Jacobean period, when playing was theoretically prohibited on church property, performances continued to be mounted in and outside church buildings. The Church retained a central role in English people's lives and its buildings remained important community spaces, literally and symbolically.

²¹⁵ Burton, p. xxix (see note 206).

²¹⁶ The audience probably included men, women and children of varying ages.

²¹⁷ Burton, p.xii.

²¹⁸ The church's incumbent at the time of the troupe's visit was probably Sir Thomas Warter. He was the incumbent until August 1, 1593. [Burton, p. 26.]

²¹⁹ If the seating arrangements for church services were imitated, it is also possible that there was some sexual segregation of the audience. In 1620 mention is made of 'women's seats' in the church, although it is possible that some seats were reserved for women from as early as the 1580s. If the women in the 1593 audience were seated separately it could have added even greater piquancy to a performance of *A Shrew*.

That numerous churches were used as playing spaces in the period provides further indirect evidence of the significant place of drama in provincial English culture. Equally, the fact that many church performances were parochial productions demonstrates the liveliness of amateur drama in provincial England. Regional communities did not always, or solely, rely upon visiting or professional performers to provide them with dramatic entertainment; and amateur, parochial theatrical activity needs to be considered if a fuller account of English Renaissance dramatic culture is to be given.

CHAPTER SIX

Drama in Early Modern Drinking Houses, 1559-1625

Playing at Inns in London

Prior to the opening and proliferation of purpose-built playhouses in Elizabethan London, acting companies were accustomed to performing in various places in the capital, but particularly favoured playing in inns. Indeed, several drinking houses became famous as theatrical venues in the metropolis (e.g. the Bell, the Bull and the Bel Savage). Even when the first playhouses opened in London, inns continued to be popular playing places, especially during winter. For instance, when the Queen's newly formed company returned to London after touring the provinces in the summer of 1583, they were licensed to perform on Wednesdays and Saturdays at the Bull and Bell inns, rather than at one of the available playhouses.¹ While, as late as 1594, the Lord Chamberlain's Men may have performed at the Cross Keys Inn in winter (although they had the use of the Theatre and performed at the open-air playhouse in the summer), indicating that the Inn was the players' preferred winter venue.²

The series of corporate and governmental regulations which attempted to restrict inn performances within the city during the late sixteenth century are one testimony to the popularity of London inns as playing places throughout the Elizabethan period. In 1565, plays were prohibited in 'eny Tav[er]ne Inne vyttellynge or other place...wher any money shalbe demaunded or payd for the syght or hyrynge of the same players'; and an injunction of January 1569 'ordered that houses, inns, and brewhouses used for common plays must not be used for such a purpose after the hour of five'. A month later a further injunction limited the playing hours to between three and five'.³ These orders were supplemented in 1574 by a Common Council act which sought to control inn playing in another respect:

¹ O. L. Brownstein, 'A Record of London Inn Playhouses from c. 1565-90', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 22 (1971), 17-24 (p. 22).

² Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages, 1300-1600*, 4 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959-1981), II:i (1963), p. 188. *

As Wickham notes, troupes probably chose to continue using inns as winter playhouses because they afforded indoor playing spaces and, therefore, 'greater warmth and protection' from inclement winter weather than the purpose-built open-air playhouses. [Wickham, II:i, p. 188.]

³ Wickham, II:i, p. 193.

F. P. Wilson, *The English Drama, 1485-1585*, ed. by G. K. Hunter (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), p. 169.

* The Lord Chamberlain asked the Lord Mayor if the troupe could be allowed to use the Cross Keys in the winter of 1594, but it is not certain that permission was obtained, as the players' use of the inn would have breached the new ban on using inns as theatrical venues (passed that year). [Information kindly provided by Andrew Gurr.]

hearetofore sondrye great disorders and inconvenyences have beene found to ensewe to this cittie by the inordynate hauntinge of greate multitudes of people, speciall ye youthes to playes, enterludes, and shewes, namelye occasyon of ffrayes and quarrelles, eavell practizes of incontynencye in greate Innes, havinge Chambers and secrete places adioyninge to their open staiges and gallyries.

Consequently,

no Inkeper Tavernekeper nor other person whatsoeuer within the liberties of thys Cittie shall openlye shewe or playe, nor cause or suffer to be openlye shewed or played, within the hows, yarde or anie other place within the Liberties of this Cytties anie playe, enterlude, commodye, Tragidie, matter, or shewe, which shall not not be firste perused and Allowed.⁴

By implication, inn playing was conventional throughout this time.

The custom of performing at London inns only appears to have declined significantly in the late 1590s, after the Privy Council joined with the Common Council in closing inns to players entirely in 1594.⁵ In 1600 this prohibition was reiterated by the Privy Council: 'especiallie yt is forbidden that anie stage plaies shalbe plaied (as sometimes they haue bin) in any Common Inn for publique assemblie in or neare the Cittie'.⁶ In referring to inn performances in the past tense, the order implies that the tradition of playing in metropolitan inns had already died out. (In actuality, inn performances in the capital and its suburbs were not entirely unknown after 1600. For example, John Taylor, the Water-poet, alluded to an after-supper performance of 'the Life and Death of Guy of Warwick' by 'the Right Honourable the Earle of Derby his men' at the Maidenhead Inn, Islington in 1618.)⁷

⁴ E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), IV (repr. 1945), pp. 272-4.

⁵ Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), p. 31.

⁶ Chambers, IV, p. 300.

⁷ Cited in E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), II (repr. 1961), p. 127.

Performing in Provincial Drinking Houses: The Choices Available to Players

Purpose-built or converted playhouses, intended primarily or wholly for theatrical use were rare in the Elizabethan and Jacobean provinces.⁸ As in London, drinking houses (and, more specifically, inns) were one of the spaces usually available for use as temporary theatres by provincial players, professional or amateur.⁹ Indeed, a growing number and variety of drinking houses (including inns, taverns and alehouses) were to be found in most late sixteenth century towns. A 1577 government survey 'listed well over 17,000 drinking houses [...] in 30 counties'; and individual towns might include as many as 22 licensed alehouses alone, as was the case at Canterbury in the year of the survey.¹⁰

⁸ There are records of two playhouses in Bristol in the early seventeenth century (Nicholas Woolfe's Wine Street playhouse and Barker's Redcliffe Hill playhouse). Likewise, there is evidence of an Elizabethan playhouse in Prescott, Lancashire. The sixteenth century Great Yarmouth 'game place house' may have been available for play performances as well; and a theatre was established in Jacobean York in 1609, but it was closed almost immediately. It is not certain that any of these venues were regularly used for play productions. Indeed, there are no explicit records of performances at the Barker playhouse, the Prescott theatre, the Great Yarmouth 'game place house', or the York theatre in the early modern period, as is discussed in more detail in chapter seven. Information about each venue is available in the following sources: Mark C. Pilkinton, 'The Playhouse in Wine Street, Bristol', *Theatre Notebook*, 37 (1983), 14-21; (on the Barker playhouse) *REED: Bristol*, ed. by Mark C. Pilkinton (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1997), p. 242; F. A. Bailey, 'The Elizabethan Playhouse at Prescott, Lancashire', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 103 (1952), 69-81; (on the Great Yarmouth house) David Galloway, 'Records of Early English Drama in the Provinces and What These May Tell Us About The Elizabethan Theatre', *The Elizabethan Theatre*, 7, ed. by G. R. Hibbard (London: Macmillan, 1981), 82-110; (on the York theatre) *REED: York*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, 2 vols (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto; London: Manchester University, 1979), I, pp. 530-1.

⁹ Jean Wilson observes that 'anyone who wished to mount a dramatic entertainment' in a 'large village or small town in the sixteenth century' would usually have had 'the choice of three indoor venues': 'the church, the guild hall (if there was one) [...] or the large upper room of the inn'. [*The Archaeology of Shakespeare: The Material Legacy of Shakespeare's Theatre* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1995), p. 30.] Inns might be a company's first or only choice of playing space in some towns, but they were also usually available for use as alternative playing places for troupes initially invited or allowed to perform in other local buildings, such as town halls and churches. However, there may have been regional variations, inn playing being less common in some parts of the country. John Wasson observes that there is little evidence of inn playing in Devon, for instance. [*REED: Devon*, ed. by John M. Wasson (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1986), p. xxvi.]

The licences issued to professional travelling troupes in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries anticipate and make provision for their performance in diverse venues. Typically, they authorise companies to perform not only in town halls and (occasionally) in school houses, but 'convenient' places: for example, King James' licence for the King's Men in 1603 sanctioned their performance 'as well within their nowe usuall howse called the Globe within our County of Surrey, as also within anie towne halls or moute halls or other conveniente places within the liberties and freedome of anie other cittie, university towne or Boroughe whatsoever within our said Realmes and domynion'. [Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 114.] Companies could use these general clauses to claim sanction for performances both in drinking houses and private houses.

¹⁰ Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History, 1200-1830* (London and New York: Longmans, 1983), p. 2, p. 49.

In most sixteenth and seventeenth century towns, acting companies would have found three kinds of drinking house: inns, taverns and alehouses.¹¹ Inns were 'usually large, fashionable establishments offering wine, ale and beer, together with quite elaborate food and lodging to well-heeled travellers', while taverns sold 'wine to the more prosperous, but without the extensive accommodation of inns'; and alehouses were 'normally smaller premises serving ale or beer (and later spirits) and providing rather basic food and accommodation for the lower orders'.¹²

Potentially, players could seek permission to perform in any available drinking house, and there is some evidence of plays and other pseudo-dramatic activity occurring in provincial taverns and alehouses. A play of *Henry the Eighth* was performed at a Warrington alehouse as late as 1632. While the impromptu theatrical 'skit' at Turner's alehouse in Langport, Somerset in 1611 is a fascinating example of the pseudo-dramatic activity hosted in some provincial alehouses. It was reported that, after drinking at the alehouse into the early hours, four men,

in contempte of the auctoritie of the Church of England, and the iurisdiction ecclesiasticall within this kingdome dissembled a consistorie, the said Aishelford taking a cushion made it 3: corner wise, and sett itt vpon his owne head [...] and named himselfe to bee a bishopp, and the said Turner named himselfe doctor Iames and the said [...] Dawe named himselfe Iohn Brothers the apparitor, and the said Aishelford or some one of the companies holding a bay leafe in his hand, The said Turner or one of the said companie vrged the said White to sweare howe manie women he had laine withall besides his owne wief: And then a woman named Agnes Hurtland alias dunstane came in

¹¹ The distinctions between these establishments were not always drawn clearly in practice, contemporaries occasionally using the terms 'inn' and 'alehouse' interchangeably. Likewise, there were 'regional variations of nomenclature. In parts of the North and West most victualling houses whether large or small, might be called inns and their landlords innholders or innkeepers. The Crown added its own ha'p'orth of uncertainty during the early seventeenth century by attempting for a few years to sell the status of inns to erstwhile alehouses'. [P. Clark, p. 5.]

Thanks to the pioneering research of earlier scholars such as R. F. Bretherton, and contemporary historians such as Keith Wrightson and, more particularly, Peter Clark, detailed information about early modern drinking-houses and their place in society is available. The discussion of drinking houses in this chapter is considerably indebted to this research (and Clark's history of the alehouse, in particular).

¹² P. Clark, p. 5.

to helpe the said Turners wief to brewe, they dealt in like manner with her, vrging her to sweare howe manie men she had laine withall besides her owne husband.¹³

However, most play performances in provincial drinking houses are likely to have been performed at inns, as was the case in London.¹⁴

Players at Early Modern Drinking Houses in Provincial England: The Evidence

Various contemporary sources indicate that travelling players stayed at inns in the course of touring. (They may have stayed at alehouses and taverns as well occasionally, but direct evidence of such visits is rare, and the former would generally be too small to accommodate a whole professional troupe.)¹⁵ There is an allusion to the 'plaiers with...theire cartes and waggons' staying 'at theire said Inne' (The Crown) in Stourbridge, Worcestershire in 1610, for instance; and when the Norwich corporation decided to pay the Lady Elizabeth's Men forty shillings not to perform in the town, the gift was 'sent vnto them to the whight horse in Tombeland'.¹⁶ By implication, the troupe were residing at the inn. Similarly, we know from a case recorded in the Woodstock Portsmouth Court Book in 1608-9 that Lord Chandos' players stayed at an inn in the town, when they visited in January, one of the players being robbed during the visit. Thomas Bradford admitted that,

vpon the Sixe & Twentieth day of Ianuary laste paste he being *servant* to certeine players belonginge to ye Lord chandios cominge to Buck Towne, he founde a litle key in the parlour at one mr porters house the Inkeper of ye bell wherewith he there opened the deske of one Richard Durrand one of the said players & there fyndinge [aboute] x s in

¹³ REED: *Lancashire*, ed. by David George (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1991), p. 96

REED: *Somerset*, ed. by James Stokes (with Robert J. Alexander), 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1996), I, p. 155.

¹⁴ Even in London performances in other kinds of drinking house were not unknown, according to Chambers: 'A gallant might [...] have his private play at night in a tavern'. [E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), I, p. 220.]

¹⁵ The itinerant troupe led by Hudson and Lister in North Yorkshire in the early seventeenth century appears to have stayed occasionally at alehouses (including that of Ralph Sadler at Burneston). [G. W. Boddy, 'Players of Interludes in North Yorkshire in the early Seventeenth Century', *North Yorkshire County Record Office Publications*, 7:3 (1976), 95-130 (p. 114).]

¹⁶ Wickham, II:i, p. 189.

REED: *Norwich*, ed. by David Galloway (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1984), p. 147.

siluer or there aboutes in a litle purse in the same deske he opened the purse & tooke forth the said mony and locked ye deske againe.¹⁷

There is also literary evidence of companies staying at inns. The *Merrie Conceited Jests of George Peele* [1606-7] includes a story about Peele staying at the same Bristol inn as a company of players, and borrowing playing gear from the troupe to facilitate a trick he played to raise money and reclaim his horse from a local stable:

Certaine players came to the towne, and lay at the Inne where George P. was to whome George was well known, beeing in that time an excellent Poet, [...]. There was not past three of the company come with the cariage, the rest were behinde, by reason of a long iourney they had, so that night they could not inact, which George hearing had presently a stratagem in his head, to get his Horse free out of the Stable: and money in his purse to beare his charges vp to Londone, and thus it was, hee goes directly to the Maior tels him he was a scholler and a gentleman and that he had a certan historie of the knight of Rodes & withall how Bristow was first founded and by whome, & [...] desired the Maior that he with his presence & the rest of his Brethren would grace his labours. The Maior agreed to it, gaue him leaue and withall appointed him a place, but for himselfe he would not be there [...], but bid him make his best benefit he could of the city and very liberally gave him an Angell, which George thankfully receives and about his businesse hee goes, got his stadge made, his history cryed and hyred the players Apparell, to flourish out his show promising to pay them liberally and withall desired them they fauour him so much as to gather him his mony at the doore, for he thought it his best course to imploy them, least they should spy out his knauery.¹⁸

When the time of the performance came, Peele went on stage and read a prologue which finished with the request that the audience, 'Sit still a while, Ile send the Actors to ye.' He then left the stage, throwing fireworks and fled the performance leaving 'the Players to answeare it, who when the Iest was knowne, their Inocence excused them.' Although the anecdote may not be true, it

¹⁷ REED: *Oxfordshire*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston, forthcoming.

¹⁸ Pilkinton, REED: *Bristol*, pp. 166-7.

suggests that it was usual for players to stay at inns, and to travel with playing gear carried in a carriage.¹⁹

Contemporary records reveal that acting troupes were sometimes entertained by local corporations at inns and taverns as well. When the Queen's Men visited Gloucester in 1559-60, corporate money was spent upon 'a banket the same day by the said maire and aldermen at the taverne upon the saide plaiers'.²⁰ While at Shrewsbury in 1560-1, 'iiijs xjd' was 'spent at the Gullet' on the 'lord wyllybes playarys', who had also received a reward for performing. [As Alan Somerset notes, the 'golet' was 'a public house, now the Hole in the Wall in Gullet Shut.']²¹

The analogous evidence of the metropolitan theatre world would suggest that players also performed in provincial inns, but explicit references to play performances in regional drinking houses are rare in surviving early modern records. Research thus far has identified 13 clear references to specific drinking-house performances in the English provinces between 1559-1625. The majority of these productions appear to have been inn performances, and a number of them are only recorded because they proved in some way controversial [see appendix x]. For example, we learn of a performance in 1582-3 by the Earl of Worcester's Men at a Leicester inn because there was a dispute between the players and the mayor prior to the production: 'The forsaide playors mett Mr Mayor in the strete nere Mr Newcomes housse [...] craved lycense ageyne to play at there Inn, & he told them they shold not, then they went away & seyde they wold play, whether he wold or not'. The company later apologised and were 'lycensed to play this night at there Inn'.²²

The evidence relating to most of the known performances is not detailed (for example, the plays performed are generally unnamed). In a number of cases all that is recorded is the name of the inn and the year of the performance (e.g. play performances are recorded at the New Inn in

¹⁹ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 167.

²⁰ *REED: Cumberland, Westmorland, Gloucestershire*, ed. by Audrey Douglas and Peter Greenfield (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1986), p. 298.

²¹ *REED: Shropshire*, ed. by J. Alan B. Somerset, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1994), I, p. 207.

REED: Shropshire, ed. by J. Alan B. Somerset, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1994), II, p. 654.

'The present building dates from the nineteenth century.' [Somerset, *REED: Shropshire*, II, p. 654.]

²² John Tucker Murray, *English Dramatic Companies, 1558-1642*, 2 vols (London: Constable, 1910), II, pp. 321-2.

Abingdon in 1559 and at the Bear Inn in Cambridge in 1599-1600, but in neither instance is the play or the acting company named).²³ In other instances, the playing troupe and the approximate date of the performance are noted but the name of the inn used is unrecorded. This is true of the production at a Leicester inn by the Earl of Worcester's Men in 1582-3.²⁴ In similar fashion, the Leicester corporation paid a joint acting troupe to perform at an inn in the town in 1559-1600, but did not state its name: 'The Erle of Derbyes players and The Erle of Dudleyes players, ioyned (at this present) togeyther as one company it is agreed to pay them 20s to plays at their Inn this night'.²⁵

Fuller references name the playing troupe, the drinking house where they performed, the year of the performance and include one or more additional details (such as a monetary donation made by the local corporation or the time and number of performances staged). Coventry's civic records preserve a reference to a performance at night by 'the Lord Shandos players [...] at the angell' in 1600 because it was performed 'contrary to maister maiors pleasure'.²⁶ Similarly, Maldon's civic archives record a night performance at the Blue Boar by Lady Elizabeth's Men in 1619 (see plate 49).²⁷ In Canterbury, when the Queen's Men performed at the 'Checkar' inn in 1608-9, the town records reveal that they received a reward of twenty shillings, and the corporation spent eight pence upon 'beere & byskette' at the inn on the same occasion.²⁸ A possible joint performance at the Swan Inn in Congleton (Cheshire) is recorded in an antiquarian transcription of the town's records for 1623. Eleven shillings was 'bestowed upon the Kings players and the Earle of Derbyes the xiiith daie of december who played at the Swanne'.²⁹

²³ In 1558-9 a payment was made to 'serten players at the newyn.' [*REED: Berkshire*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston, forthcoming.] The performance at the Bear Inn in Cambridge is alluded to indirectly in a Vice Chancellor's Court memo concerning Henry Pepper, a student of the university: 'ye sayed Pepper was this day present in a tumultuous [...] and disorderly meetinge beholdinge [...] certayne players of interludes at ye signe of the beare'. [*REED: Cambridge*, ed. by Alan H. Nelson, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1989), I, p. 378.]

²⁴ Murray, II, p. 322.

²⁵ Leicester, Leicestershire Record Office, Hall Papers 1598-1600, BR II/ 18/5, fol. 628.

[This reference was kindly drawn to my attention by Professor Bernard Capp of Warwick University.]

²⁶ *REED: Coventry*, ed. by R. W. Ingram (London: Manchester University; Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1981), p. 356.

²⁷ A. Clark, 'Maldon Records and the Drama', *Notes & Queries*, 10th series, 8 (1907), 43-4 (p. 44).

²⁸ 'Records of Plays and Players in Kent, 1450-1642', ed. by Giles Dawson, *Malone Society: Collections*, VII (Oxford: Oxford University, 1965), p. 18.

²⁹ Alan C. Coman, 'The Congleton Accounts: Further Evidence of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama in Cheshire', *REED: Neswletter*, 14:1 (1989), 3-18 (p. 9).



Plate 49: (a) The Blue Boar Hotel, Maldon
[Author's own photograph]



Plate 49: (b) The courtyard of the Blue Boar Hotel, Maldon
[Author's own photograph]

Sometimes further insight into recorded performances and their staging is afforded indirectly. For example, the witnesses' depositions relating to the affray which occurred at the Red Lion Inn in Norwich (1583) contain various intriguing pieces of information about the performance that was being given at that time in the inn's yard by the Queen's Men.³⁰ Supplementary evidence about named playing companies and the drinking houses recorded as playing places can also afford an indirect insight into some of the known drinking house performances.

That there are few clear records of performances in provincial drinking houses does not necessarily mean that playing in early modern public houses was rare or unusual in the provinces. Indeed, the paucity of the evidence may say more about early modern record keeping and the limits of surviving forms of documentation. Most of the evidence for provincial play performances in this period derives from financial accounts and records of payments for, or relating to, play productions (such payments are mainly found in civic and ecclesiastic accounts, although some are to be found in the financial records of schools, colleges and wealthy private individuals).

The chances of finding such financial documentation in relation to drinking house productions are slimmer, as performances were less likely to be sponsored by a local body or private individual.³¹ Indeed, players at drinking houses were more likely to be paying to perform, offering their host a share of their takings (or a set fee) in return for the use of his/ her house as a temporary theatre. The further evidence of drinking house drama which publicans' accounts might afford is unavailable to us. Financial documents from humbler early modern individuals, such as inn, tavern or alehouse keepers, are rarely preserved (if they were kept in any detail at the time).

Fortunately, the few references to actual drinking house performances in provincial records are supplemented by allusions to intended public house performances. These provide indirect evidence that drinking houses (and inns particularly) were viewed as potential playing spaces in

³⁰ Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, pp. 71-3.

³¹ Civic sponsored inn performances were not unknown (e.g. the performance by the Earl of Derby's and the Earl of Dudley's Men at a Leicester inn was patronised by the corporation, as was the production by the Queen's Men at the Checker Inn in Canterbury in 1608-9, cited above). [LRO, Hall Papers, fol. 628. Dawson, p. 19.] However, what evidence there is indicates that play performances patronised by local corporations or churches would usually be hosted on civic or ecclesiastical property.

many regional communities. In 1611, for instance, when a group of local Cheltenham ‘artificers and laborers’ decided to mount a play, they announced their intention of performing at a local inn:

on xvijth daie of Ianuary last past Guido dobbins [...] accompanied with Richard Clerke and divers other younge fellowes [...] caused proclamacion to be made [...] that whosoever would heere a play should come to the signe of the Crowne [at] such an howre, where they intended to play.³²

Similarly, in 1624, despite being commanded ‘to forbear to play within the liberties of’ the city of Norwich, Francis Wambus and the other Lady Elizabeth’s Men proceeded to advertise a performance at one of the city’s inns. The town records on 26th April note that:

This day wakefild [...] brought to mr Maior a note *which* he found fastened vpon the gate of the howse of Thomas Marcon beinge the Signe of the white horse nere Tomeland in Norwich wherein was written theise wordes, Here within this place at one of the Clocke shalbe Acted an exelent new Comedy called the Spanishe Contract By the Princesse Servantes.³³

This performance was also prevented and Wambus was arrested.

Further references to drinking house performances may be discovered as research continues, but it is also possible that known records include more evidence of playing at public houses than is apparent. For instance, some of the known references to players performing at their hosts’ houses may conceal inn performances, as it was not unusual to refer to publicans as ‘hosts’. An entry found in the Mayor’s Court Books at Norwich (in 1582-3) could be one such disguised allusion. It is recorded that the Earl of Worcester’s players ‘dyd play in their hoste his hows’ after they had been refused permission to perform in the town and had received a corporate gratuity.³⁴ Similarly, when in York in 1595 ‘my Lord Willowbies players’ were authorised to ‘play at ther

³² Douglas and Greenfield, p. 288.

³³ Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 181.

³⁴ Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 66, p. 65.

host house or such other house or place within this Citty as they can get for thre or four days', they were perhaps being licensed to perform at the inn where they were staying.³⁵

It is, likewise, possible that some of the records of players performing at 'houses' or the houses of named individuals are records of drinking house productions rather than performances in private houses. For example, the payment to 'mr harpham for ale when the quens plears dyd play at his howse' in Nottingham in 1571-2 could indicate that Harpham was a publican and that the performance was at his drinking house. Similarly, 'marmaduke gills howse' in York, where 'my Lord Shandoze players' were to 'haue Libertie to playe' in 1601 may have been an inn.

Certainly, we know that the troupe was not unaccustomed to inn-playing, having performed at the Angel in Coventry in the previous year.³⁶

In some cases, additional information can clarify whether such performances were in private houses or drinking houses. In 1616, for instance, various people were presented at the Thirsk quarter sessions having hosted the unlicensed acting troupe led by Richard Hudson and Edward Lister. Further information reveals that at least two of the people fined were alehouse keepers (Ralph Sadler of Burneston and James Stubbs of Wilton). In these cases, the men are likely to have hosted the company at their alehouses.³⁷

That playing at drinking houses was conventional in many parts of provincial England as well as in London (despite the dearth of specific evidence) also finds indirect confirmation in the fact that a number of regional corporations issued orders relating to inn-playing. At Norwich, the corporation prohibited performances at one of the town's inns in 1601: 'whereas my lord of Hertfords Players were suters to haue leaue to plaie at the signe of the whight horsse in Tomelland but for this daie, it is ordered that no players or playes be made or vsed in the seid house either now or hereafter'. However, the prohibition does not appear to have been permanent, the corporation allowing performances at the inn at a later date. (In 1616 the Queen's Men were reportedly permitted to perform at 'Powles howse' for two days, and 'Powles' house is thought to be synonymous with the White Horse).³⁸ Meanwhile, at Chester in 1615, the town's

³⁵ Johnston and Rogerson, I, pp. 464-5.

³⁶ *REED: Nottinghamshire*, ed. by John C. Coldewey, forthcoming.

Johnston and Rogerson, I, p. 496.

³⁷ Boddy, p. 24.

³⁸ Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 117, p. 146.

SOME DIAGRAMS
EXCLUDED ON
INSTRUCTION FROM
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civic authorities complained that 'mens servantes and apprentices neglectinge their Masters busines doe Resorte to Innehowses to behold such Plaies and there manie times wastfullie spende thar Masters goodes', and banned playing in the town hall and 'in anie other Place within this Citie or the Liberties therof in the night time or after vje (i.e. six) of the Clocke in the eveninge'.³⁹

By contrast, some regional corporations actively encouraged the use of inns for play performances. At Bridgnorth (Shropshire) in 1601-2 the corporation prohibited 'playars of commedies Tragedies or other stage playes' from using the 'Counsell howse or Towne hall', but agreed that 'the playars therof may playe in their Innes, yf yt so please them'.⁴⁰ In 1619-20 the Southampton corporation passed a similar order stating that 'hereafter yf anie suche staige or poppett plaiers must be admitted in this towne That they provide their places for their representacions in their Innes or el<.>where they can best provide But euer be debarred for vseinge the like in the Towne Hall.'⁴¹ Meanwhile, at Salisbury an 'order of 1624 laid down that all plays should in future be at the George in High Street.'⁴² [The George Inn, which was owned by 'the corporation from 1413 to 1858', survives to the present, although it has been 'extensively altered' (see plates 50-52).]⁴³

³⁹ REED: *Chester*, ed. by Lawrence M. Clopper (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto; London: Manchester University, 1979), p. 293.

⁴⁰ Somerset, REED: *Shropshire*, I, p. 21.

⁴¹ REED: *Hampshire*, ed. by Peter Greenfield and Jane Cowling, forthcoming.

⁴² Chambers, I, p. 336.

Royal Commission on Historical Monuments in England: An Inventory of Historical Monuments in the City of Salisbury, I (London: HMSO, 1980), p. 97.

After c. 1760 the building 'was occupied not as an inn, but as dwellings. In 1858 the buildings again became a hostelry.' At this time everything 'except the W. range' was pulled down and 'about the same time, the N. range was built. In 1967 the N. range was demolished and the lower storey of the W. range was remodelled, the carriage through-way which led from High Street to the inn-yard being replaced by a wider passage as the pedestrian entrance to a modern shopping precinct (Old George Mall). The upper rooms of the W. range were adapted as a restaurant.' [RCHM: *Salisbury*, p. 97.]

⁴³ Performances at the George Inn might have been staged in one of the Inn's rooms, such as the large, north-east chamber which survives in the east part of the West range (see plate 52). 'It goes through two storeys and has a hammer-beam roof with big, rather coarse heads against the hammer-beams.' [The *Buildings of England: Wiltshire*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner and Judy Nairn, revised by Bridget Cherry (London: Penguin, 1963; 1975), p. 453.] The 'walls of this chamber have massive 14th century timber uprights with cross-bracing. [...] The collar-purlin and the original rafters have been replaced by later through-purlins and common rafters.' [RCHM: *Salisbury*, p. 99.]

Plays might also have been performed in the inn-yard: 'drawings show that the eastern part of the s. side of the courtyard was overlooked by an open first-floor gallery projecting on curved brackets', which might have been used for some spectators or as an upper level for performances. [RCHM: *Salisbury*, p. 98.]

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Evidence about the Drinking Houses used for plays

Although most of the early modern provincial drinking houses clearly recorded as playing spaces do not survive and detailed information about their size and make-up is scarce, there are exceptions. And what evidence there is can be supplemented with information about analogous early modern drinking houses. The Blue Boar in Maldon and the George in Salisbury survive [see plates 49, 50-52]; and the yard of the Red Lion in Norwich appears to have been preserved although the inn no longer stands.⁴⁴ Similarly, there is secondary evidence about inns such as the Bear in Cambridge, the Dragon in Kendal and the New Inn at Abingdon (all of which were used for plays in the early modern period but do not survive today).

The Bear, later known as the Black Bear, was 'used for political assemblies' in 1643, 1644, and 1662, and 'from 1773 to 1809 it was used as a concert hall by the Music Club'. As Nelson observes, the inn 'presumably [...] had a capacious hall, which would have been suitable for plays'.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, there is an allusion to the 'Dragon' in an order of the aldermen and burgesses concerning the company of tanners in Kendal from 1592 (just a few years before the performance at the inn in 1593-4). The document mentions the 'sign of the Dragon in Stricklandgate' (Stricklandgate being part of the main street in Kendal).⁴⁶ The 'Green Dragon Inn' which John F. Curwen described as being in Stricklandgate in *Kirkbie Kendall* in 1890 was probably the same inn. The inn was described by Curwen as being 'an old oak-galleried' house of 'quaint architecture'.⁴⁷ Surviving evidence reveals that the 'Inn or Hospice' called the New Inn 'which appears in the abbey accounts [at Abingdon] in the 15th century' stood in the Market Place. We also know that it was used for other forms of entertainment in the sixteenth century, including public dinners.⁴⁸ The Inn appears to have survived into the eighteenth century as in 1778 'the "old-accustomed Inn" called the New Inn and Kings Arms was for sale.'⁴⁹

⁴⁴ See *Royal Commission on Historical Monuments in England: An Inventory of Historical Monuments in Essex*, II (London: HMSO, 1921), pp. 174-5.

D. F. Rowan, 'The Players and Playing Places of Norwich', in *The Development of Shakespeare's Theater*, ed. by John H. Astington (New York: AMS Press, 1992) 77-94 (p. 89).

⁴⁵ *REED: Cambridge*, ed. by Alan H. Nelson, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1989), II, pp. 1231-2.

⁴⁶ Richard S. Ferguson, *A Boke off Recorde of Kirkbie Kendall* (Kendal: T. Wilson, 1892), p. 150.

⁴⁷ John F. Curwen, *Kirkbie Kendall* (Kendal: T. Wilson, 1890), p. 326.

⁴⁸ *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Berkshire*, IV, ed. by William Page and P. H. Ditchfield, (London: St. Catherine, 1924; repr. London: Dawsons, 1972), pp. 433-4.

⁴⁹ Page and Ditchfield, *Berkshire*, IV, p. 434.

SOME DIAGRAMS
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The Attractions of Playing at Provincial Drinking Houses

Inns

Inns lent themselves to use as playing venues in a number of ways. They usually had the advantage of being large buildings. Indeed, major inns were 'often the largest public buildings in a town or village (after the parish church)'.⁵⁰ Consequently, they might afford a number of large spaces suitable and available for use by players, including public and private indoor chambers and open-air yards.⁵¹ William Harrison indicated how extensive some Elizabethan inns were when he described how some were 'able to lodge 200 or 300 persons and their horses at ease'.⁵²

At the same time, touring players could enjoy the convenience of staying at their place of performance, inns affording good accommodation and refreshments, while inn-yards usually provided a secure and spacious place for the storage of players' carts (and playing gear).⁵³ Harrison celebrated the quality as well as the quantity of accommodation and service available at Elizabethan inns in his *Description of England* (1583):

Those towns that we call thorowfares have great and sumptuous innes builded in them for the receiving of such travellers and strangers as passe to and fro. The manner of harbouring wherein is not like that of some other countries, in which the host or goodman of the house doth challenge a lordlie authoritie over his guests, but cleane otherwise, sith everie man may use his inne as his owne house in England, and have for his monie how great or how little varietie of vittles, and what other service himself shall thinke expedient to call for. Our innes are also verie well furnished with naperie, bedding, and tapestry.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ P. Clark, p. 7.

⁵¹ The George Inn in the High Street at Kingston-upon-Hull in the sixteenth century also appears to have included an open-air space traditionally reserved for communal recreation, known as 'the Butcroft'. This space is alluded to in a lease of 1598: 'A lease then sealed to matthew Brownell and mary his wife of one messuge Inne or mansion house now the George in ye high street with one garden therevnto adioyning with thappurtenances now in their tenure the close called the Butcroft reserving libertie as formerly for games & plaies therein.' [Cited in Patricia Badir, 'Un-civil rites and playing sites: Some early modern entertainment records from Kingston-upon-Hull', *REED: Newsletter*, 20:1 (1995), 1-11 (p. 7.)]

⁵² P. Clark, p. 6.

⁵³ According to Brownstein 'the larger inns of the period' might even have 'three or four connecting yards'. [O. L. Brownstein, 'The Saracen's Head, Islington: A Pre-Elizabethan Inn Playhouse', *Theatre Notebook*, 25 (1970-1), 68-72 (p. 20).]

⁵⁴ William Harrison, *The Description of England*, ed. by Georges Edelen (Ithaca, New York: Cornell

Harrison, likewise, praised the security of English inns, observing that, if a customer 'lose aught whilst he abideth in the inn, the host is bound by a general custom to restore the damage, so that there is no greater security anywhere for travellers than in the greatest inns of England'.⁵⁵

Although staying at an inn was potentially expensive and more costly than lodging at an alehouse or tavern, it is possible that troupes negotiated with innkeepers for reduced or free accommodation (and perhaps even free board) in return for a share of the takings at their performance(s), although no evidence of such negotiations survives.⁵⁶ That some players did find paying for inn accommodation expensive and difficult finds some indirect confirmation in Marston's portrait of Sir Oliver Owlet's players in *Histrionomastix*. In Act six, scene one, the hostess of the inn where they have been staying complains that they have not paid for their board and accommodation, and one of the troupe attempts to offer her some of their playing gear in lieu of payment:

Hostess. Maister Cunstable hoe, these *Players* wil not pay their shot.

Post. Faith sir, *Warre* hath so pinch't us we must pawne.

[...]

Fellowes bring out the hamper choose some-what
out o'th stocke.⁵⁷

Inns were venues associated with recreation (as well as hospitality for travellers) and, as Clark notes, inns were increasingly important in early modern England as 'social centres', particularly

University, 1968), p. 397.

⁵⁵ William Harrison, pp. 397-8.

⁵⁶ Ingram makes the same point: 'in dire enough straits', troupes may even have agreed to play at an inn 'in exchange for room and board, with the innkeeper taking all the profits'. [William Ingram, 'The Costs of Touring', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 6 (1993), 57-62 (p. 58).]

Ingram suggests that staying at inn would cost, at minimum, '6p for a bed', and an average meal might cost a further six pence. [Ingram, p. 58.] In Marston's *Histrionomastix*, the hostess of the inn where Sir Oliver Owlet's Men have been staying claims that they owe her 'six pence a peece' for the 'Sharers dinners' and 'pence' for food for 'the hirelings'. [*The Plays of John Marston*, ed. by H. Harvey Wood, 3 vols (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1939), III, Act VI. 1. No line numbers are given in Wood's edition.] Charges would also be made for the stabling of the horses companies might travel with: 'The Privy Council periodically set the rates that innkeepers could charge for board and stabling a horse; in the 1590s a normative charge for a night at a country inn would have been about four pence for hay and litter, and eight pence to a shilling for a bushel of oats'. [Ingram, p. 58.]

⁵⁷ *Histrionomastix*, VI. 1.

'for the affluent'. They 'not only performed important victualling services but also acted as the centre point of a galaxy of commercial, governmental and leisure activities'. Inns were important as staging places 'for the multitude of carriers'; growing numbers of merchants and traders held meetings and made bargains at inns; and, from the seventeenth century, innkeepers frequently acted 'as provincial postmasters'.⁵⁸ To play at inns was to perform in one of the spaces at 'the heart of the social world' of most early modern English communities. Companies were effectively guaranteed local attention. At the same time, local and visiting inn customers provided a ready and potentially generous audience, most inn customers being drawn 'from the landed, mercantile and professional classes'.⁵⁹

Hosting an acting company and a number of play performances had its attractions and benefits for innkeepers as well. They could expect to profit from the increased trade provided by the audience attracted to performances. [In addition, they might receive a share from the takings and some payment from the players for accommodation and board, if they were residing at his/ her house as well.] Equally, hosting dramatic entertainment was a means of publicizing one's inn and thereby attracting increased trade in the longer term.

Taverns and Alehouses

While alehouses and taverns were more numerous than inns, they were typically smaller and less readily adaptable for performance than inns. Some urban alehouses might include a 'parlour and hall' which 'served as drinking rooms, with the kitchen providing extra space when occasion requires', but 'many tippling houses were rudimentary with little more than a hall and a loft above and open windows without glass'.⁶⁰ Likewise, alehouses and taverns were not necessarily provided with a yard and did not usually afford stabling facilities, which was a potential problem for a troupe travelling with a horse-drawn wagon. Room for performing and storing playing gear, and for audiences was therefore likely to be limited. Performances at alehouses and taverns were potentially less profitable than inn productions as well, because their customers were generally poorer. This was particularly true of alehouses. As Clark records: the 'great majority of alehouse customers were recruited from the bottom half of the social order'.⁶¹

⁵⁸ P. Clark, p. 9, p. 14.

⁵⁹ P. Clark, p. 7.

⁶⁰ In 1611, William Vaughan spoke dismissively of alehouses as 'these paltry cottages'. [Cited in P. Clark, pp. 65-6.]

⁶¹ P. Clark, p. 123.

As playing venues, alehouses were further disadvantaged because they and their customers were subject to much tighter, and potentially prohibitive, regulation than inns. Unlike inns, alehouses were required to have 'a licence from the justices of the peace'.⁶² Likewise, many corporations issued orders controlling the closing hours of alehouses ('after which food and drink might not be sold to any except travellers') and the amount of time customers were allowed to spend in such establishments. R. F. Bretherton notes that: 'the Hertfordshire authorities in 1596-7 had forbidden the sale of food and drink on Sundays and "hollydaies" and on ordinary days after 9' o'clock at night from Easter until Michaelmas and after 8' o'clock during the winter'. A statute of 1604 threatened to penalise 'alehouse keepers who allowed drinking or tippling to anyone except for one hour at dinner-time upon the usual working days.'⁶³

Despite their comparative disadvantages as playing spaces, taverns and alehouses were not without their attractions as entertainment venues. They were, like inns, important as social spaces and places of communal recreation, catering for the less affluent members of society, as inns catered for its wealthier members. Notably, players drawn from the lower social orders (such as unlicensed provincial acting troupes and amateur groups of craftsmen and labourers, akin to Shakespeare's Mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) are known to have performed occasionally in alehouses. Hudson and Lister's unlicensed Yorkshire troupe visited the houses of at least two alehouse keepers during their 1616-17 tour; and in 1632 a group of lower-class young men mounted an amateur performance of *Henry the Eighth* at Gregory Harrison's Warrington alehouse.⁶⁴ For lower-class entertainers, alehouses and taverns were places where they could more easily gain admission and entertain their social peers.

⁶² P. Clark, p. 40.

As Clark observes, inns being 'the preserve of the upper classes [...] enjoyed relative freedom from the heavy burden of statutory controls imposed on alehouses from the sixteenth century. Ancient inns could only be prosecuted under common law, and though there was an attempt under James I to licence inns, this proved abortive.' [P. Clark, p. 6.]

⁶³ R. F. Bretherton, 'Country Inns and Alehouses', in *Englishmen at Rest and Play: Some Phases of English Leisure, 1558-1714* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1931), 147-201 (p. 150).

If people were not supposed to be at alehouses later than eight or nine o'clock at night it would have been difficult to stage evening play performances. Equally, rules theoretically preventing local customers from spending more than an hour at a time in alehouses presented a problem if actors wished to attract an audience including local people. Contemporary professional play performances typically lasted around two hours.

⁶⁴ Boddy, p. 24.

George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 96.

Some alehouse keepers are known to have actively promoted entertainment at their houses, as a way of attracting custom: for example, 'John Johnson of Litherland in Lancashire "did keepe and mayteyne att his house there beare beatinge and fidlinge" in 1617, and George Burrell of Morton Tower, Essex, procured "a boye with a Hobby horse and two other men that shewed trickes and drew much companie to his house".' ⁶⁵

Performances: The Preparations and Conventions

After finding a publican ready to host dramatic entertainment, it is likely that troupes and their hosts decided between them when and where the performance(s) were to be staged and agreed upon the sharing of takings. ⁶⁶ Special financial arrangements may have been made if the players were to reside at the drinking house as well.

However, not all play performances at provincial drinking houses were necessarily intended to be public or commercial (i.e. played before a paying audience); and permission to use drinking houses for playing was not always sought. When Gregory Harrison was questioned about a play performance at his Warrington alehouse in 1632, he claimed that the young men involved had simply 'desyred him [...] that they might goe; into a Loft which was in his house' and said that 'hee knoweth not what that they were doinge in the Chamber [...] but as hee hath hard since they were actinge of a play'. ⁶⁷

The Time of performances

From the surviving records of drinking house performances, we know that plays were usually staged in the afternoon or evening, as in London. At Norwich, for instance, in 1583 the Queen's Men played at the Red Lion in the 'afternone'. ⁶⁸ While Lord Chandos' Men performed at the Angel in Coventry at 'night' in 1600, and Lady Elizabeth's Men were still playing at 'xi of the clocke in the Blue-Boore' in Maldon in 1619, prompting the intervention of a local bailiff: "Mr

⁶⁵ Keith Wrightson, 'Alehouses, Order and Reformation in Rural England, 1590-1660', in *Popular Culture and Class Conflict, 1590-1914: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure*, ed. by Eileen Yeo and Stephen Yeo (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester; Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1981), 1-27 (p. 9).

⁶⁶ As indicated above, some hosts may have been content to receive a set-payment for the players' use of their drinking house as a temporary theatre. Others may have wished to receive a particular share of the entry fees or 'gatherings' made at performances.

⁶⁷ Preston, Lancashire Record Office, QSB 1/ 106/ 72.

⁶⁸ Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 70.

Baylyff coming and requesting them to breake off ther play so that the companye might departe' they called Bailiff Frauncis "foole".⁶⁹

The place of performance

Early modern inns were conventionally large buildings, as noted above (p. 305), often incorporating a number of public and private indoor chambers and one or more courtyards in their complex. Richard Samwell's description of the Boar's Head Inn in London provides an example of the multiplicity of rooms and outdoor spaces to be found at some inns. In 1601 he described how his father's part of the inn included,

a hall, *parlor* and *kitchin* being of one flower wth a *celler vnderneath* part of the hall, twoo chambers *ouer* the *said* hall a chamber *ouer* the *kitchin*, a chamber *ouer* the entry going into the *said* *Inne*, on the west side of the same entrye and on the east side thereof [...] a roome to drinke in three *parlors* a *cellar &* three stables, one gallery wth seven *seuerall* chambers or roomes *ouer* the *said* drinking rooms *parlors* *Cellors &* stables together wth the east end of the *barne* [...] there, and on the west side of the *said* *yarde* [...] the *ostre* wth a *lofte* *ouer* yt to laye hay in.⁷⁰

The complex included further rooms and buildings. A number of these spaces might be available and adaptable for performance. The choice of spaces afforded by alehouses and taverns would usually have been more limited and generally indoors, as noted above (p. 307) (e.g. alehouses might only afford a choice between a downstairs drinking parlour and one upper chamber; taverns might include more drinking rooms and upper chambers available for use but these rooms would not necessarily be spacious in their dimensions).

In most cases, the precise location of recorded performances is not noted (e.g. in 1587-8 the Maidstone corporate records only note that ten shillings was paid to the players that 'plaied at starre about Christmas', and at Kendal in 1593-4 the corporate records simply allude to money 'layd forth to ye players at ye dragon the laste yere').⁷¹ Nonetheless, it has often been assumed

⁶⁹ Ingram, p. 356.

A. Clark, p. 44.

⁷⁰ The inn was adapted for use by players (e.g. a stage and tiring-house were built in the inn's yard). Herbert Berry, *The Boar's Head Playhouse* (London, Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1986), p. 96.

⁷¹ *REED: East Kent*, ed. by James Gibson, forthcoming.

that the usual place for inn performances was outdoors in inn-yards. At least one yard performance is recorded in the early modern provinces. In 1583 the Queen's Men are unequivocally described as performing in the yard of the Red Lion in Norwich.⁷²

However, surviving records reveal that players used indoor spaces as well. Indeed, indoor performances may have been more common.⁷³ Lady Elizabeth's Men are likely to have staged their night performance indoors at the Blue Boar in Maldon in 1619.⁷⁴ Similarly, when Lord Berkeley's players visited Dorchester (Dorset) in 1608 and were denied permission to perform in the local town hall, they performed instead within a local inn, as Hugh Haggard, a local butcher explained (in his deposition for the Star Chamber case against Matthew Chubb):

he sayeth that he Remembreth that the Lord Barkeleyes players were at Dorchester and as this deponent harde they did desyre to playe in the Towne hall of Dorchester but the magistrates of the towne would not geve them leave wherevppon Sir Adyan Scroope Knight beyng at the defendant mr Chubbes howse at supper offered that the sayd players should playe in his chamber in an Inne after supper and Requested the sayd defendant mr Chubbe to goe thither with him which he did accordinglye.⁷⁵

[The performance may have been staged at the George Inn, 'Dorchester's "finest hostelry" according to (David) Underdown.' The inn was 'destroyed by the fire of 1613' in Dorchester, but rebuilt 'when Matthew Chubbe, through some shady dealing, acquired its lease in 1617.' It does not survive to the present.]⁷⁶

Douglas and Greenfield, p. 174.

⁷² Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 70.

⁷³ Glynne Wickham was one of the first scholars to question whether most inn performances were staged in inn-yards: 'I have not myself encountered as many as ten references in the whole two hundred year period between the accession of Henry VII in 1485 and the accession of James II in 1685 in which either plays or players are specifically linked with the yard of an inn'. [Wickham, II:i, p. 187.] He also pointed out that performances in inn-yards could pose practical difficulties at inns with a single courtyard: 'the yard is virtually the only place in the inn that cannot be closed to traffic without paralysing all its services'. [Wickham, II:i, p. 188.]

⁷⁴ In 1619, the local Bailiff asked the Lady Elizabeth's Men to 'breake off' the performance they were giving 'in the Blue Boore' at Maldon because of the lateness of the hour. [A. Clark, p. 44.] The phrasing suggests that the performance was being given inside and it is unlikely that a night performance would have been staged in the inn-yard.

⁷⁵ *REED: Dorset / Cornwall*, ed. by Rosalind Conklin Hays and C. E. McGee, Sally L. Joyce and Evelyn S. Newlyn (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1999), p. 195.

⁷⁶ Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 342, p. 39.

The inn performance at Witney, Oxfordshire in the early 1650s which ended with the tragic deaths of

Playing Indoors

If performing indoors at an inn (or other drinking house), companies were likely to use one of the larger public or private chambers.⁷⁷ These were often located on an upper floor (e.g. there was reputedly a 'huge garret' at the top of the 'Chequers' Inn in Canterbury which might have been used by the Queen's Men when they performed at the inn in 1608-9).⁷⁸ While they may have varied in dimension, most large inn chambers or halls are likely to have been rectangular or square in plan, as was the case in large private houses. In inns, players could generally expect rooms to be well furnished (e.g. with tables, chairs and/or forms and soft furnishings such as curtains and hangings). Alehouse and tavern rooms were likely to be less well furnished but were not necessarily barely or crudely equipped. Clark reports how, 'in the main drinking rooms of larger premises one sees an array of chairs, joined tables, plus the usual stools, perhaps with a mirror in the hall or a Bible on a lectern.'⁷⁹

In some instances, players would have been performing against a painted backdrop, many drinking houses containing chambers decorated with wall paintings. Sometimes such paintings depicted stories 'drawn from classical mythology but more frequently from the Bible'.⁸⁰ At the White Swan Inn in Stratford-upon-Avon, for instance, the ground floor room is painted with 'scenes from the story of Tobias and the Angel, divided by feigned pilasters and flanked by panels of foliage and flowers'.⁸¹ While in the 1630s Donald Lupton described how 'in certain

several spectators, when the floor of the chamber in which it was being staged collapsed, provides indirect evidence that there was an established tradition of performing indoors at regional inns in the early seventeenth century. In this instance, the performance of *Mucedorus* by amateurs from Stanton-Harcourt at the White Hart Inn took place in a 'larg chamber' which 'sometime had been a malting roome,' rather than in the yard (which was also to be found at the inn). (The performance is alluded to in a work published by the town lecturer, John Rowe in 1653: 'Tragi-Comaedia Being a Brief Relation of the Strange and wonderfull hand of God discovered at Witney in the *Comedy Acted there February the third*, where there were some *Slaine*, many *Hurt*, with severall other *Remarkable Passages*.') [Johnston, *REED: Oxfordshire*, forthcoming.]

⁷⁷ The inn room in which Sir Adrian Scrope invited Lord Berkeley's Men to perform at Dorchester may have been one of the hostelry's finer and larger private chambers.

⁷⁸ J. Charles Cox, *Canterbury* (London: Methuen, 1905), p. 280.
Dawson, p. 18.

⁷⁹ P. Clark, p. 67.

⁸⁰ Edward Croft-Murray, *Decorative Painting in England, 1537-1837*, 2 vols (London: Country Life, 1911), I, p. 28.

⁸¹ Croft-Murray, I, p. 186.

London alehouses [...] “you shall see the history of Judith, Daniel in the lion’s den, or Dives and Lazarus painted upon the wall”.⁸²

Playing Outdoors

Inn courtyards, which might be used for outdoor playing, varied in size and shape but could be large (e.g. the yard at the Boar’s Head Inn in London appears to have measured 121 feet 52” at its longest point and 54 feet 6” at its widest) and were often square or rectangular.⁸³ [Sometimes inns incorporated more than one courtyard in their complex. In these instances troupes were perhaps more likely to use an inner yard where less disruption to inn traffic would be caused.] These yards might be entirely surrounded by buildings or only framed by buildings on two or three sides and were usually entered through a gated archway (as can be seen at the Blue Boar in Maldon) [see plate 49]. Sometimes the buildings framing inn yards were galleried, as at the Falcon in Cambridge or the Boar’s Head in London, potentially providing an upper seating area for inn-yard performances.

Preparing the Spaces

Whether companies were performing in the yard or an indoor chamber, it appears to have been usual for professional troupes, at least, to play upon a temporary wooden stage.⁸⁴ There is no evidence to suggest that any Elizabethan or Jacobean provincial inns were fitted with purpose-built stages and tiring-houses of the kind erected in the yard at the Boar’s Head Inn in London.⁸⁵ In indoor chambers the platform would probably be set up at one end of the room, as was customary when performing in banqueting halls in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period.⁸⁶

⁸² P. Clark, p. 67.

⁸³ Berry, p. 144.

The yard of the Boar’s Head (in London) was not a regular square or rectangle. Similarly, the yard of the Red Lion in Norwich (where the Queen’s Men performed in 1583) may have been unusual in its shape: ‘a map drawn around 1835 by a Joshua Manning shows an enclosed roughly cruciform yard in the right location’ (although the yard may have been shaped in this way after 1583). [Rowan, p. 89.]

⁸⁴ Such platforms would need to be low if players were performing in a low-ceilinged room.

⁸⁵ In 1603, Oliver Woodliffe referred to the ‘Tireing house & stage’ which had been built in the yard of the Boar’s Head Inn. [Berry, p. 24.] There is a slim possibility that one later provincial inn was adapted as a theatre in similar fashion. The ‘playhouse’ alluded to in the 1637 accounts of Sir John Deane’s grammar school, Northwich (Cheshire) may have been established in one of the two inns owned by the school in Chester (The Saracen’s Head and The Swan). [Majorie Cox, *History of Sir John Deane’s Grammar School* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1975), p. 58-60.] If the playhouse was intended for theatrical use and was created within, or from, one of the Chester inns, it is possible that its establishment included the erection of a permanent stage. However, there appear to be no records of such work in the school accounts.

⁸⁶ If Lady Elizabeth’s Men performed in the first floor hall apparently to be found at Maldon’s Blue Boar

Similarly, during yard performances, the stage might be set up at one end of the court or in its widest section, if the yard was irregular in shape.

How the spectators at public drinking house performances were accommodated is generally unrecorded. However, when playing indoors it is likely that the spectators were placed before the playing area and may have been mainly seated (using available forms, stools and chairs). During yard performances, it is more likely that most of the spectators stood, being accommodated in the yard around the stage or playing area. Additional spectators might have been accommodated in the galleries of galleried inn yards as well. For evening performances torches and candles would have been used to provide artificial lighting. These resources would have been found at most inns, although the actors may have had to pay their host for the supply of extra lighting.

Publicity

Companies intending to perform publicly at provincial drinking houses are known to have publicized their productions in various ways. Sometimes troupes perambulated the town or village with drums and trumpets proclaiming the details of the performance. Guido Dobbins and his fellow artisans chose to advertise their planned performance at the Crown in Cheltenham in much this way in 1611.⁸⁷ Likewise, some troupes posted up play bills announcing drinking house performances, as occurred in London.⁸⁸ The commencement of performances might be marked with the sounding of trumpets and drums as well, as was customary when performing in the London playhouses, and as occurred when Stanton-Harcourt amateurs performed *Mucedorus* in the early 1650s at the White Hart Inn in Witney (Oxon.): 'About seaven a clock at Night they caused a Drum to beat, and a Trumpet to be sounded to gather the People together.'⁸⁹

Inn in 1619, they might have placed their platform at the upper end of the room, the audience entering through the screen located at its lower end.

This space in the Blue Boar is described in the relevant volume of the Royal Commission for Historical Monuments (Essex): 'Inside the building, in the main block, is some early seventeenth century panelling. A room s. of the entrance archway has moulded ceiling-beams. The lower bay at the back of this room is the earliest part of the house, and the partition is continued and in it are three similar but lower openings [...]; it is possible that this partition formed the 'screen' at the end of a hall of one storey.' [*RCHM: Essex*, II, pp. 174-5.]

⁸⁷ Douglas and Greenfield, p. 288.

⁸⁸ As noted above (p. 301), Francis Wambus and the rest of Lady Elizabeth's Men advertised a planned performance at the White Horse Inn in Norwich in 1624 by placing a note upon 'the gate of the howse' which read: 'Here within this place at one of the Clocke shalbe Acted an exelent new Comedy called the Spanishe Contract By the Princesse Servantes'. [Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 181.]

⁸⁹ Rowe, cited in Johnston, *REED: Oxfordshire*, forthcoming.

Entry to Performances

In the early years of the Elizabethan period, players at inns may have raised money from their performances by making an audience collection or 'gathering' at the end of performances, as was sometimes the practice when troupes played at town halls. This practice was gradually replaced by most professional companies with a more formal system of entry charges (of the kind to be used at the playhouses as well): a member of the company would be placed at the entry to the playing place at the drinking house with a collection box. Those people wishing to see performances were required to pay an entry fee before entering. That at least some troupes were using this system as early as the 1580s is revealed by the infamous Red Lion performance at Norwich by the Queen's Men. As witnesses noted, one of the Queen's Men (possibly John Singer) stood at the gate and acted as 'gate keeper'.⁹⁰

Audiences

Direct information about the spectators at inn performances is scant, and there is virtually no evidence in relation to alehouse or tavern audiences. However, if the audiences for inn performances were drawn at least partly from the body of usual inn customers, we would expect the spectators to be mainly male and to include people belonging to society's higher or wealthier groups (e.g. gentlemen and wealthy merchants).⁹¹ One might expect to find some local tradesmen, craftsmen and yeomen as well. Although such people were less frequent customers at inns, a play performance may have been the kind of special occasion which would attract their custom.

The information provided about spectators at the Red Lion performance would seem to bear out such speculations. The audience attracted included Thomas Osborne, gentleman, Edmund Brown, draper, William Kilby, worsted weaver, Thomas Holland, carrier, and Edmund Knee, yeoman.⁹² The Norwich performance also demonstrates that audiences could include local people as well as visiting inn customers. The Red Lion spectators included local men (such as Thomas Holland and Edmund Brown) and people from other areas (e.g. Thomas Osborne is described as coming from 'Kyrbye Bydon', and Edmund Knee came from Yelverton).⁹³

⁹⁰ Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 73.

⁹¹ Notably, all the witnesses cited in the case of the affray at the Red Lion in Norwich (1583) who had been at the play were male.

⁹² Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, pp. 71-3.

⁹³ Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, pp. 73-4.

People from lower social groups were probably less likely to attend inn performances, but may not have been unknown in play audiences. Certainly, the Chester authorities in 1615 suggested that in their town inn performances were sometimes attended by young apprentices and servants.⁹⁴ Similarly, children may have attended some inn performances in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period. The audience for the *Mucedorus* performance at the White Hart, Witney, evidently included a number of children as three boys and two girls were among the people killed when the chamber floor collapsed.⁹⁵

II- Case Studies

In the following section I shall be looking at two drinking house performances in greater detail, as a complement to, and a fuller illustration of, the general account of drinking house performances offered above. The performances to be considered are the productions staged by the Queen's Men in the yard at the Red Lion in Norwich in 1583, and the performance of *Henry the Eighth* by local amateurs in the loft of a Warrington alehouse in 1632.

These two performances have been chosen because together they reflect something of the diversity of drinking house drama. They illustrate that plays were staged indoors as well as outdoors, at alehouses as well as inns, and by amateurs as well as professionals. Likewise, as performances staged at opposite ends of the country and in different centuries, they reflect the fact that playing at drinking houses was not confined to one region or the sixteenth century.

i-The Queen's Men at the Red Lion

In 1583 Edmund Tilney, Queen Elizabeth's Master of the Revels hand-picked twelve actors from the leading troupes of the period to form a new company of Queen's Men.⁹⁶ During the summer of 1583 the company were engaged in their first provincial tour. Their travels included a visit to Norwich where they were rewarded forty shillings by the local corporation and performed at the

⁹⁴ Clopper, p. 293.

⁹⁵ Rowe, cited in Johnston, *REED: Oxfordshire*, forthcoming.

⁹⁶ The troupe included William Johnson, John Laneham and Robert Wilson (previously of the Earl of Leicester's company), John Bentley (who was to be 'the new company's leading tragedian'), John Adams, Richard Tarlton (previously members of the Lord Chamberlain's Men), and John Singer. The other members of the company in 1583 may have included Lionel Cooke, Alexander Cooke, Tobias Mylles, John Dutton and John Garland. [Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 200, p. 201, p. 202, p. 211.]

Red Lion Inn.⁹⁷ By November they were back in London and were licenced to perform 'at the Synges of the Bull in Busshoppesgatestreete, and the sygne of the Bell in gratioustreete and nowhere else'.⁹⁸

Evidence of the company's performance at the Norwich inn on the 15th June, 1583 is afforded indirectly. While the performance was in progress an affray occurred at the gate in which at least three of the Queen's Men and a local spectator (Henry Brown) became involved. The incident culminated in the killing of a local man. The references to the inn performance are to be found in a number of the depositions collected during the subsequent judicial investigation; several of the people questioned had been spectators at the play. Henry Brown described the affray and the circumstances of its occurrence in particular detail when he was interrogated:

This examynate sayeth That he this examynate beinge at the play this Afternone word was brought into the play that one of her maiesties seruauantes was abused at the gate wherevpon this exanynate with others went owt and one in a blew cote Cast Stones at Bentley and brocke his heade beinge one of her maiesties seruantes wherevpon this examynate sayed [...] wilt thowe murder the quenes man and the fellowe called this examynate villan agayne and therevpon this examynate stroke hym with his Sworde and hyt hym on the legg Quod Note this blowe was geven at Bloomes backgate betwne the red lyon & mr davyes howse Quod henrye Browne being further examyned the sevententh day of Iune 1583 [...] how manye of the players went from of the Stage on Satturdaye to Stryke the man wyche was Slayne he sayeth there were but two of the players wiche went viz Bentley and one other in a black dublyt called Synger and Tareton also was going but he was Stayed by the way and being examyned whoe dyd Stryke the man wiche was killed besydes this examynate hee sayethe the other man wyche went owte with bentley Strake the man with an Armynge Sworde one blowe vppon the shoulder & followed the fellow wiche fled ffrom the whyte horse gate in St Stephans vnto mr Roberte Davyes howse [...] henrye Browne further examyned [...] saeth Quod That after that <.> he this examynate had Stricken the man Synger dyd Strike the man &

⁹⁷ Other performances recorded during this time (1582-3) include Ipswich, Aldeburgh, Kirtling, Abingdon, Gloucester, Bath, Bristol, Canterbury, Faversham, Dover, Lydd?, Leicester, Nottingham, Rye, Shrewsbury, Marlborough. [Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998), p. 175.]

⁹⁸ Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 212.

this examynate sayed to hyme give hym noe more for he dowted he had ynoughe already and wen they came frome the man agayn Synger sayed to this examynate be of good Chere for yf all this matter bee layed on the thowe shalt haue what ffrendshipe we can procure thee and he further sayeth before he dyd Strycke the man he dyd see Bentley thrust at hym twice with his naked Raper the one thrust was about thee knee but hee knoweth not where the other thrust was.⁹⁹

The depositions of the other witnesses generally confirm Brown's account of the affray and some include additional details about its circumstances (e.g. Edmund Brown reported that the disturbance at the gate began because 'one wynsdon would have intred at the gate but woold not haue payed vntyll he had been within').¹⁰⁰

In outline the affray appears to have unfolded as follows. While the troupe's performance at the Red Lion was in progress, a local man named Wynsdon attempted to gain entry to the play without paying first. When Wynsdon was refused entry by the gatekeeper (possibly John Singer) an argument ensued. Word of this disturbance reached the players and audience inside, prompting Henry Brown (a servant of Sir William Paston) and a number of the players to go to the gate (including John Bentley, Richard Tarlton, and John Singer, if he was not already at the gate as its keeper).¹⁰¹ Tarlton tried to eject Wynsdon, while Bentley hit him on the head with the hilt of the sword which he had carried with him from the stage. Wynsdon fled from the gate and joined 'George', the victim, nearby (apparently the latter was Wynsdon's servant). Bentley pursued them both. Wynsdon managed to escape, leaving Bentley to chase the other man, followed by Singer and Brown. Bentley appears to have struck the man who, then cast stones at Bentley's head, prompting Singer and Brown to pursue him further. Both struck 'George' with their swords, but Brown hit him first and was believed to have dealt the fatal blow.

This account provides a startling example of the disorder which could erupt at Elizabethan and Jacobean play performances. However, in the context of this chapter, what is most significant about the testimony of Henry Brown and the other witnesses is the insight which they provide

⁹⁹ Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, pp. 70-1.

¹⁰⁰ Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, pp. 72-3.

¹⁰¹ It is not absolutely clear whether Singer was the gatekeeper. Edmund Brown refers to the man 'in the blacke dublet wich kept the gate', and Henry Brown alludes to 'one other in a black dublyt called Synger'. [Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 73, p. 71.]

into the performance which was being staged at the Red Lion. From Browne's testimony alone we learn that the Queen's Men were playing in the inn's yard upon a stage on a Saturday afternoon. He also provides indirect proof that spectators had to pay to see the performance, delivering their payment to a gatekeeper. He names three of the players and indicates that they were using props. Drawing upon the cumulative evidence of the 1583 witnesses and wider sources of information about the inn and the troupe, it is possible to reconstruct a number of aspects of the Red Lion performance.

Reconstructing the Performance

The Place and Time of Performance

The inn where the performance was staged is consistently named as the 'red lyon' in St Stephen's, and it is explicitly recorded as occurring in the yard. Although a number of Red Lion inns have existed in Norwich, research indicates that the inn visited by the Queen's Men was that located in Red Lion street.¹⁰² W. Wicks described the location of the inn as early as 1925 and argued that it was the Red Lion used by the Elizabethan troupe:

Passing along the east end of Orford Place, which prior to the commencement of the tramways in 1900, was called Red Lion Street, an inn stood there known as the 'Cricketer's Arms'...But long years before that it was the old 'Red Lion', which stood partly on the site...There was a spacious yard at the side which, in the olden times, was a noted place for entertainments. It was here that Richard Tarlton, the famous clown, appeared in 1583 with Bentley and Singer.¹⁰³

More recent investigation by D. F. Rowan has lent weight to Wicks' identification of the site. Rowan's research also suggests that the yard may survive although the inn itself is no longer extant:

The Cricketer's Arms continued to function in the south end of this range of buildings in the location of the Red Lion. In the early sixties the site was occupied by a branch of the

¹⁰² In *The Inns and Taverns of Old Norwich*, J. R. Young notes that 'Red Lion' was a popular name for inns in Norwich (e.g. in 1840 there were 'ten Red Lions, as well as a British Lion, an ordinary Lion, and four Golden Lions'). [Cited in Rowan, p. 86.]

¹⁰³ Cited in Rowan, p. 88.

Nat West Bank, although today one can clearly read 'The Cricketer's Arms' in letters not totally erased from a stone plaque over the bank's offices. The yard is now known as Orford Place.¹⁰⁴

Unfortunately, it is not clear how much the yard may have been altered since 1583 as the earliest illustration of the town in which the yard is depicted only dates from 1835.

In playing at an inn, the company was probably choosing to perform in a familiar venue. As members of other companies in London (prior to 1583), it is likely that they staged plays at metropolitan inns; and the players were to perform at the Bull and Bell inns as the Queen's Men that winter. The depositions of the Norwich witnesses reveal that the Queen's Men were performing at the Red Lion in the afternoon on Saturday, June 15th. The performance probably began between twelve and one o'clock and may have been staged in the afternoon because the company were using the inn-yard (rather than an indoor chamber). Artificial lighting was unnecessary.

Preparing the Space

A stage had been erected in the yard.¹⁰⁵ This may have been a temporary wooden platform owned and carried by the Queen's Men, or an improvised platform made from barrels or forms. (Puttenham describes improvised stages of 'benches and barrel heads' being used at drinking houses.)¹⁰⁶ In either instance, the platform was 'not too high to jump from', as several players are described as coming 'of the Staige': William Kilby reported seeing three 'of the players rvmne of the Staige', while Edmund Brown described how 'Bentley [...] came of the stage'. According to Edmund Knee, 'Tarleton an other of the Players went of the staige also'.¹⁰⁷ It may have been only two or three feet in height. The precise location of the stage in the yard is not described, but it

¹⁰⁴ Rowan, p. 89.

¹⁰⁵ The stage is alluded to by Henry Brown, William Kylbye, Edmund Brown, Edmund Knee, and Nicholas Thurston. [Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 71, p. 73, p. 74].

¹⁰⁶ Cited in Francois Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World: Elizabethan Seasonal Entertainments and the Professional Stage*, translated by Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993), p. 34.

¹⁰⁷ Alan B. Somerset, "'How Chances it they Travel?': Provincial Touring, Playing Places, and the King's Men", *Shakespeare Survey*, 47 (1994), 45-60 (p. 55). Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, pp. 71-3.

might have been placed opposite the gated entrance. This could explain how the actors became so quickly aware that there was a disturbance at the entrance.

As the performance was staged in the yard, it is likely that the spectators stood around the stage. There are no references to the audience being seated or to the actors having to climb over seats to get from the stage to the gate. Similarly, there is no evidence that the inn yard was fitted with galleries, which might otherwise have been used to accommodate some of the spectators.

It is clear from the eyewitness accounts, that the audience gained entry to the performance through the 'gate' at the back of the Red Lion, after paying an entry fee to the 'gatekeeper', identified by Edmund Brown as 'he in the blacke dublet' (elsewhere named as Singer).¹⁰⁸ In London it had become usual to place the money collected from the spectators in a box. The Queen's man posted at the Lion's gate may have had such a collection box, although the testimony of Edmund Knee suggests that the gate-keeper held the money collected in his hand. Knee describes how he heard that Mr. Wynsdon, who 'wold haue Come in at the gate agaynst the will of the gate keper' thrust against him and 'spilt the monye out of the gate keepers hand'.¹⁰⁹

The Audience

The size of the play's audience is not recorded, but the depositions taken from spectators provide us with some information about its social make-up. For instance, all the eye-witnesses who had been spectators at the play were men. This does not mean that there were not any women in the audience, but they may have been fewer in number. This would not be surprising as inn customers were predominantly male. The audience included gentleman (such as Thomas Osborne), yeoman (e.g. Edmund Knee), various tradesmen and craftsmen (e.g. Edmund Brown is described as a draper, and William Kilby, as a worsted weaver), and gentlemen's servants (e.g. Henry Brown is referred to as 'Sir william Pastons seruant').¹¹⁰ This range of spectators is not unlike that recorded as frequenting inns on other occasions. Some information about the geographical origins of the audience is, likewise, afforded in the judicial documents, the clerk(s)

¹⁰⁸ Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 73.

¹⁰⁹ Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 73.

¹¹⁰ Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, pp. 71-3.

As Peter Clark notes, 'small farmers, craftsmen and the like' were not generally regular inn customers, but a play performance was the kind of event which might attract their custom. [P. Clark, p. 7.]

occasionally noting the witnesses' place of domicile. As indicated above (p. 315), this information reveals that the audience included local people as well as visitors.

Staging

The depositions of the witnesses provide various pieces of information about the troupe's use of playing gear at the Red Lion. They reveal that costumes were used, for example: John Bentley is described as coming from the stage 'in his playing apperell', and George Jackson describes him as wearing 'a players berd vpon his face'.¹¹¹ The eye-witnesses' accounts also suggest that props were being used. A number of people allude to the players' carrying of weapons from the stage. Edmund Knee describes how 'one Bentley whoe played the Duke in the play havinge a raper in his hand beinge vpon the stage and vnderstanding of the Stryffe at the gate went of the Stage'; and Jackson alludes to him appearing at the inn's gate 'with a Sworde or a raper drawn in his hand'.¹¹² Similarly, Edmund Brown reports that John Singer 'ran vp into the stayge' and 'brought An Armynge Sworde'.¹¹³ Notably, there is no suggestion that the players' swords were fake, and the use which Bentley and Singer made of their weapons upon the pair of local men demonstrates how readily they could be applied to violent ends in reality.¹¹⁴ The fact that the props named are weapons is intriguing. Although these props may have been mentioned (while others were not) because of their relevance to the affray, their use in the production could indicate that the play included fighting or had a martial subject.

The Play

The name of the play which the players 'had begonne' is not recorded in any of the depositions.¹¹⁵ However, a number of the witnesses observe that John Bentley 'played the Duke'.¹¹⁶ With such limited information to guide us, it is not possible to identify the play performed definitively, but plausible suggestions can be made, based upon our knowledge of the Queen's Men's repertory in the 1580s. Likewise, it is possible to eliminate some of the known Queen's Men's plays because they do not include a 'Duke' or are known to date later than

¹¹¹ Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 72, p. 75.

¹¹² Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 73, p. 75.

¹¹³ Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 73.

¹¹⁴ MacIntyre and Epp note that Elizabethan players are likely to have usually used genuine weapons, including 'real daggers.' [Jean MacIntyre and Garret P. J. Epp, '“Cloathes worth all the rest”: Costumes and Props', in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. by John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University, 1997), 264-285 (p. 280).]

¹¹⁵ Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 72.

¹¹⁶ Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 73.

1583.¹¹⁷ *The Famous Victories of Henry V* could have been the play performed, for example.

This is one of the earlier Queen's Men's plays which includes a 'Duke' (the Duke of York) and

¹¹⁷ In their history of the Queen's company, McMillin and MacLean list nine plays definitely known to have been included in the troupe's repertory between 1583-99, having been published in this period as plays performed by the Queen's Men: *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes*, *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, *King Leir*, *Three Lords and Ladies of London*, *The Troublesome Reign of King John*, *The Old Wives' Tale*, *Selimus*, *The True Tragedy of Richard III*. [McMillin and MacLean, pp. 88-9.] Records of court performances by the troupe in the 1580s and 1590s identify several other plays apparently in their repertory in this period, but now lost: *Felix and Philomena* [lost] (performed at court by the troupe, 3 January, 1585), *Five Plays in One* [lost] (performed at court by the troupe, 6 January, 1585), *Phyllida and Corin* [lost] (performed at court, 26 December, 1584), *Three Plays in One* [lost] ('scheduled for the Queen's Men at court, 21 January 1585, but not given'). [McMillin and MacLean, pp. 92-3.] *Valentine and Orson*, another lost play, is also identified as a Queen's play in this period. The Stationers' Registers of 23 May 1595 and 31 March 1600 allude to the play 'as played by the Queen's Men'. [McMillin and MacLean, p. 93.] Several further plays have been attributed to the Queen's Men's repertory (in the 1580s and 1590s), as McMillin and MacLean note, including *A Looking Glass for London and England* (1594), *Alphonsus of Aragon* (1599), *The Cobbler's Prophecy* (1594), *James IV* (1594), *Lochrine* (1594), *Orlando Furioso* (1593), *Pedlar's Prophecy* (1594), and *Seven Deadly Sins*. However, 'none of these texts names the company on the title-page', and there is no clear evidence to identify them as belonging to the Queen's Men's repertory, therefore, they are not considered here. [McMillin and MacLean, pp. 92-3.] However, there may have been other Queen's Men plays which have been lost and which were unrecorded.

A number of the identified Queen's Men's plays appear to post-date 1583 by some time and therefore would not have been performed at the Red Lion. For example, Harbage dates *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, between 1589-1592. *The Troublesome Reign of King John* was written post-1587, when the second volume of Holinshed was published (Holinshed's reprinted text being the play's main historical source). *The Old Wives' Tale*, is usually dated c. 1590, and *Selimus*, possibly dates from between 1586-1593, although a later date is favoured by modern scholars such as Bradley. [*The Annals of English Drama, 975-1700*, ed. by Alfred Harbage, revised by S. Schoenbaum (London: Methuen, 1964), pp. 52-3, pp. 56-7. *The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England*, ed. by J. W. Sider (London and New York: Garland, 1979), p. xxi. David Bradley, *From Text to Performance in the Elizabethan Theatre: Preparing the Play for the Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), p. 231, p. 232]. The lost play *Valentine and Orson* also appears to date from the 1590s, being first registered with the Stationers in 1595 and a printed version of the play appearing in 1598. [Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 211; Harbage, pp. 66-7.]

Other plays can be eliminated as candidates for performance at the Red Lion simply because they do not contain a 'Duke' (e.g. *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes*, *Three Lords and Ladies of London*). Determining whether the troupe could have been performing one of their lost plays is more difficult. However, there are reasons to think that the play performed at Norwich was not one of the texts which is no longer extant. For example, whether or not *Phyllida and Corin*, *Felix and Philomena*, *Five Plays in One* or *Three Plays in One* included a 'Duke' character, the performance of the plays at Court during the 1584-5 Christmas season makes it less likely that they were being performed in the summer of 1583. [Chambers, IV, p. 101.] It was apparently more usual for troupes to perform new plays at court at this date, carrying them into the provinces subsequently. Although, at a later date, this was less often the case.

If the lost plays can be eliminated, *The Famous Victories of Henry V* and *The True Tragedy of Richard III* remain as possible candidates for performance at the Red Lion. Both include a 'Duke' (the Duke of York). Of the two, it is perhaps more likely that *The Famous Victories* was the play performed, as we know that the troupe were performing this play in the 1580s, while *The True Tragedy* is thought to date from the end of the 1580s or early 1590s.

Evidence that the company were performing *The Famous Victories* before mid-1587 (when

which requires a cast of twelve men, in keeping with the troupe's size in 1583.¹¹⁸ The play also includes martial action and calls for characters equipped with swords (e.g. one would expect Henry and his men to be armed as they prepare for battle with the French in scene 14).¹¹⁹

The play being performed at the Red Lion was interrupted while the 'Duke' was on stage. In a performance of *The Famous Victories* this would locate the disruption between half and two-thirds of the way through the production. The Duke of York appears for the first time in scene nine, again in scene twelve and probably for the last time in scene fourteen.¹²⁰ This would be in

company member, William Knell died) is afforded in one of *Tarlton's Jest*, in which allusion is made to a performance of the play in London with William Knell in the role of Henry V: 'At the Bull in Bishops-gate, was a play of Henry the fift, wherein the judge was to take a box on the eare; & he was absent that should take the blowe, Tarlton himselfe, ever forward to please, tooke vpon him to play the same judge, besides his own part of the clowne: and Knel then playing Henry the fift, hit Tarlton a sounde boxe indeed, which made the people laugh the more, because it was he. But anon the judge goes in, and immediately Tarlton in his clownes cloathes comes out, and askes the actors what newes'. [Cited in *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, ed. by Geoffrey Bullough, 8 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; New York: Columbia University, 1957-75), IV (1962), pp. 289-90.] As Knell did not join the troupe until 1585, this same allusion has prompted scholars to assume that the play post-dates 1585 (in which case it could not have been performed at the Red Lion in 1583). However, this is not a necessary assumption. Although the troupe may have been performing the play between 1585 (when Knell joined the troupe) and 1587 (when he died), this does not mean that the play could not have been written and performed earlier, with another Queen's Man in Henry's role. The troupe of 1583 was certainly large enough to perform the play, as David Bradley estimates that it could be performed by a cast of twelve people (Bradley, p. 230).

¹¹⁸ The Duke of York's part is not a major one which could seem to count against its identification as the play being performed at the Red Lion. We might not expect Bentley to play a minor part, being the troupe's leading tragedian. However, it was not necessarily his only role.

¹¹⁹ *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*, in Bullough, pp. 332-4. Hereafter all references to the play will be cited by line and page number in the text.

Performing *The Famous Victories* at the Red Lion would not have posed any particular difficulties as the play does not call for especially elaborate staging. The costumes required in the play could have been drawn from the troupe's stock of apparel; and, most of the props required are small and could easily have been carried in the company's travelling stock (e.g. crowns, coins, swords, a dagger for Henry, a treaty, drum, trumpet, curtain). The eyewitnesses' accounts reveal that weapons, at least, were used. Items such as Derick's 'girdle of shoes' (scene 14) and John Cobler's 'packe full of apparell' (scene 14) might be supplied from the company's stock of costumes or personal belongings. The company may have expected to borrow larger items of stage furniture such as the chairs called for in the play. The only more unusual prop required is the 'Tunne of Tennis Balles' the French Archbishop delivers from the French Prince in scene 9. In this instance, the company might have deliberately carried balls with them in their stock of props.

Supplying the sound effects and music required in the play (e.g. in scene 8) was probably also straightforward. Contemporary evidence indicates that many professional troupes carried instruments with them on tour and included actors who were musically trained: for example, the royal patent issued to the Earl of Leicester's Men in 1574 not only licensed them to act but 'also to use and occupie all such Instrumentes as they have alredie practised, or hereafter shall practise, for and during our pleasure'. [Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1970), p. 21.]

¹²⁰ The play contains roughly twenty scenes. These scene divisions are not marked in the quarto of 1598.

keeping with the accounts which describe the play as being in progress when the affray at the gate occurred.¹²¹

The Aftermath of the Performance

After the killing of the local man there is no indication that the play was resumed. If this raised any outcry among spectators, their complaints are unrecorded. The players involved in the affray, and the local man, Henry Brown, who intervened on their behalf, did face formal reprisal. John Bentley, John Singer and Henry Brown were all 'committed to jail' (the players on the 17th June).¹²² The players were released two days later on bail.¹²³ The last records of the case date from 23 September, 1583 when 'recognizances' are recorded for Bentley, Singer and Brown (Bentley and Singer did not appear at the court); and Brown was granted 'benefit of clergy' after confessing his guilt for the murder.¹²⁴

ii- The Acting of *Henry VIII* at a Warrington Alehouse, 1632

Like the performance at the Red Lion, the play performance at Gregory Harrison's Warrington alehouse is recorded in contemporary judicial documents. In this instance, it was the performance itself which proved controversial and which became the subject of a quarter sessions court case. The young men who had acted the play found themselves in trouble because the performance took place on the Sabbath during service time. Playing on Sundays had been prohibited by King

They have been added by later editors such as Bullough but reflect the breaks in the action of the play.

¹²¹ The interruption might have occurred while the company were staging scene eleven, in which Henry V first appears as King and is visited by the Archbishop of 'Burgess' with tennis balls from the French Prince. (This could explain why Richard Tarlton was near at hand and able to rush to the gate with Bentley. He would have been waiting to go on-stage in the next scene as 'Derick'.) However, the battling spirit, which led Bentley to leap from the stage to aid the gatekeeper, would perhaps have been more likely roused by performing scene fourteen in which Henry V and his lords prepare to fight the French. [This scene includes Henry's rallying speech before the battle with the French: 'My Lords and louing Countrymen, / Though we be fewe and they many, / Feare not, your quarrel is good, and God will defend you:/ Plucke vp your hearts, for this day we shall either haue/ A valiant victorie, or a honourable death.' [Scene 14. 1154.]

¹²² Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 378.

¹²³ John Bentley was bound for forty pounds for himself and twenty pounds each from Thomas Bloome 'mercator of the city' and George Drum, 'haberdasher'. Similarly, John Singer was bound for forty pounds for himself and twenty pounds each from John Cape, 'tailor', and John Quasshe, 'yeoman'. [Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, pp. 378-9.]

¹²⁴ Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 381.

James, while church attendance on Sundays and holy-days had been compulsory 'for every one above fourteen' since the beginning of the Elizabethan period.¹²⁵

The Case

An outline of the events which took place on 6th May at the alehouse is provided in the depositions taken before Thomas Ireland (Justice of the Peace) on the 11th May:

Gregory harison of warrington within the Countie of Lancaster Alehouse keeper beinge [...] Examined the day and yeare a boue written [...] sayth that vppon Sunday Last beinge the 6th day of this Instant may; about 12 or one of the Clocke; there came into his house in warrington afforesaid; some younge men; and desyred him this Examine; that thay might goe; into a Loft which was in his house; the which this Examine not thinkeinge that they would haue stayed any Longer then ffor the drinkinge of a Cann: or tow of alle; suffered them to goe vp, and there this Examine Confesseth; that they were for an oure or tow; and there were taken by the Cunstables and Churchwardens of the towne of warrington; but this Examine sayth hee knoweth not what thay were doinge in the Chamber soe Longe; but as hee hath hard since thay were actinge of a play; and further sayth not. [...] Iohn ssmyth Thomas Houlbrocke, Iohn willie of ouerford within the Countie of Lancaster william Hardman Iohn Cadewell William wildigge Robert wicke Iohn Choner And Randle Rylence of warrington in the Countie afforesaid beinge Examined the day and yeare aforesaid; sayth; that thay all Concentered to gether; to meete at the house of one Gregorie Harison in warrington afforesaid; vppon Sunday beinge the 6th day of may Last past; there to acte a play Called Henery the Eaight; which thay accordingly did; and as thay were in actinge of it; were in tyme of deuine Seruise aprehended by the Churchwardens and Cunstable of warrington; and soe brought before a Justice of peace.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ See W. P. Baker, 'The Observance of Sunday', in *Englishmen at Rest and Play: Some Phases of English Leisure, 1558-1714*, ed. by Reginald Lennard (Oxford: Clarendon, 1931), 81-144 (p. 100).

The punishment for failing to attend church on Sundays and holy-days was a fine of 'twelve pence' for 'every such offence [...] to be levied by the churchwardens to the use of the poor'. [F. G. Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts* (Chelmsford: Essex County Council, 1973), p. 75.]

¹²⁶ George, REED: *Lancashire*, pp. 95-6.

The information contained in these depositions (and the other relevant records) is brief but includes some intriguing details about the performance and its performers, providing a fascinating insight into an example of alehouse drama.

The Performers

Nine men were presented at the Ormskirk quarter sessions for their performance in the play at Warrington. The men listed as performers were John Willie, John Smyth, Thomas Houlbrock, William Hardman, Robert Wick, William Wildigge, Randle Rylance, John Cadwell and John Choner. The quarter sessions orders indicate that there were more people at the alehouse with them who may have been involved in the performance as well, but they are not named. Reference is made to the nine men being 'taken by the Cunstables and Churchwardens' with 'others'.¹²⁷

According to Harrison, the named actors were 'young men'.¹²⁸ The examinations taken on the 11th of May reveal that they included local Warrington men and visitors from neighbouring 'ouerford' (Orford). Additional information about the men is provided in the bonds taken for their appearance at the quarter sessions. John Smyth is 'described both as a husbandman and a webster', Thomas Houlbrock as a 'webster', John Willie as a 'husbandman', William Hardman as a 'teldy' ('possibly a tent-maker'), Thomas Cadwell as a 'webster', William Wildigge as 'a labourer and a blacksmith', Robert Wick as a 'labourer and a smith', Randal Rylance as a 'labourer and a joiner', and John Choner simply as a 'labourer'.¹²⁹ As this list reveals, most of the men were craftsmen by profession. They were not professional performers. Such men were common customers at alehouses, as Clark records: husbandmen, 'labourers and poor craftsmen [...] together formed the basic core of alehouse clients in Tudor and early Stuart England.' Likewise, young people formed a 'large contingent' of alehouse customers.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 96.

¹²⁸ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 95.

¹²⁹ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 337.

It was not unknown for craftsmen and labourers to perform plays in the early modern provinces. Such people might be involved in local civic or parish drama, and there is some evidence of such men banding together to become strolling players occasionally. Robert and Christopher Simpson who led the company of actors presented at the Helmesley quarter sessions (Yorkshire) in 1612 were reportedly a cordwainer and shoemaker by training, and the other members of the troupe included William Harrison, a labourer and Edward Consett, a tailor. [Boddy, p. 32.]

¹³⁰ P. Clark, p. 127.

What motivated the young men to act at a local alehouse is not explained. Neither do we know if this was the men's first taste of performance. However, the fact that they had chosen a play and playing place, and agreed upon a performance date in advance is striking, indicating that time and thought had been devoted to the scheme, and that they approached the planned performance with some seriousness.

The Audience

There does not appear to have been an audience for the performance, unless the 'others' referred to in the quarter sessions order were spectators. (Certainly, there is no indication that the performance was commercial or open to the public.) It may have been a rehearsal. If there were spectators, their number was limited and they were presumably young men as Harrison does not mention any women being of the party which ascended to his loft.

The Place

The records locate the performance at Gregory Harrison's alehouse, but the name of the alehouse (if it had one) is not given. Likewise, no allusion to its location in Warrington is made. This makes it difficult to establish which Warrington building was used and whether it survives to the present. One of the only sources of information about alehouses in early modern English towns are alehouse keepers' recognizances (recorded in quarter sessions documents). The relevant records for Warrington in 1632 have not been located, but those for 1628 reveal that there were at least two alehouses in Warrington at this date. Their landlords are named as John Bullinge and David Morris.¹³¹ Whether either of these alehouses was that later owned by Harrison, or whether his drinking house was a separate alehouse (established post-1628) has been impossible to establish thus far. However, it is likely that there were more than two alehouses in Warrington in 1632. Although the town was not large, Leland refers to it being 'of a pretty bigness' even in 1535 and in 1586 'its inhabitants numbered 2250'. It also hosted a market which attracted visitors as well as locals to the town.¹³² Contemporary accounts indicate that there were a number of inns in the town as well. In Holinshed's *Itinerary* he referred to the 'inns in Lancaster,

¹³¹ This information was kindly supplied by Bruce Jackson, County Archivist at Lancashire Record Office in a private letter (21st December, 1998).

¹³² Leland, cited in *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Lancashire*, III, ed. by William Farrer and J. Brownbill (London: Constable, 1907; repr. Folkestone: Dawsons, 1990), p. 305.
Henry Fishwick, 'Lancashire in the time of Elizabeth', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6 (1877), 183-202 (p. 191).

Preston, Wigan, and Warrington' being so much improved 'that each comer' is 'sure to lie in clean sheets wherein no man hath lodged' and 'whether he be horseman or footman, if his chamber be once appointed, he may carie the kaie [key] with him as of his owne house'.¹³³

A number of public houses dating back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are to be found in twentieth century Warrington, including 'The Old Fox' and 'The Barley-Mow'.¹³⁴ (Today, both establishments are described as inns, but they may have been alehouses in the past. This is perhaps particularly likely with regards to 'The Old Fox' which is a 'small two-storey' house.)¹³⁵ Both include upper chambers which could have been, or which might resemble, the 'loft' used by the players.¹³⁶ The survey of 'The Archaeology of Warrington's past', published in 1976, suggested that 'The Pickering Arms' and the 'Marquis of Grandby' also date back to the Elizabethan period.¹³⁷ Whether any of these drinking houses once belonged to Harrison and were used for the 1632 performance is impossible to discover at present.

Whichever Warrington building housed Harrison's alehouse, the description of the men going up to play in the loft reveals that an upper chamber was used. As indicated previously, alehouses were generally small buildings and the room used was probably little different to an upper room in an average domestic building. Presumably, the room was reasonably spacious as it was large enough to accommodate the nine men and some 'others'. Any furnishings in the 'loft' are likely to have been simple. Indeed, the description of the room as a loft might indicate that it was essentially bare of furniture. This may have been one of its attractions for the players, more room being afforded for acting.

The Play

In the performers' collective deposition and in the quarter sessions order relating to the case, it is recorded that the play performed by the men was *Henry VIII*. (It is referred to as 'Henery the Eaight' and 'henry the eight'. It is one of the few named provincial performances between 1559-

¹³³ Cited in Fishwick, p. 191.

¹³⁴ Farrer and Brownbill, III, p. 318.

¹³⁵ Farrer and Brownbill, III, p. 318.

¹³⁶ The Barley Mow, for example, has a first floor room 'completely panelled and with a good chimney-piece of Jacobean style'. [Farrer and Brownbill, III, p. 318.]

¹³⁷ This information was kindly supplied by Janet Hill of Warrington Library in a private communication (19th January, 1999).

1642.)¹³⁸ While the author of the play is not named, the play performed is likely to have been either Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* (published in the folios of 1623 and 1632) or, more probably, Samuel Rowley's *When You See Me, You Know Me*.¹³⁹ Rowley's play was certainly more readily available than Shakespeare's play. Not only had it been published in more editions by 1632 (first appearing in print in 1605 and being reprinted in 1613, 1621 and 1632), but these editions were quartos and therefore cheaper to purchase.¹⁴⁰ One would not usually expect craftsmen and labourers of the kind performing at Warrington to be able to afford, or likely to purchase, a folio edition of plays. While quarto play texts might cost as little as twopence, the evidence of Sir Edward Dering's accounts indicates that a copy of the 1623 Folio of Shakespeare's plays would have cost at least a pound.¹⁴¹

Shakespeare's play would also have been less easily acted at the alehouse, demanding a larger cast and incorporating scenes theoretically requiring more elaborate staging (such as the procession before the divorce trial in Act II, scene 4, and the Coronation and Christening processions in Act IV, scene 1 and Act V, scene 4, respectively).¹⁴² [Although such moments might be glossed over, one of the actors simply reading-out the directions, it would have been easier to choose a play which would not require such protracted omissions.]

There is one respect in which Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* could have been more attractive to the Warrington performers. Lancashire was a county famous for the persistent Catholicism of many of its inhabitants, especially in the late sixteenth century (e.g. in 1574 the Privy Council had sent a letter to the Earl of Derby describing the county as 'the very sincke of Poperie').¹⁴³ Warrington was situated in an area particularly associated with Catholic recusancy in this period, as Walton

¹³⁸ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 96.

¹³⁹ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 337.

Henry VIII was a famous (or infamous) historical figure in early modern England, not only because he presided over the Reformation, but because of his many marriages (and his execution of two wives). That at least two plays had been written dramatising his life reflects the fact that there was considerable curiosity about the king in the early seventeenth century. The appearance of a new quarto edition of Rowley's play and of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* (in the second Folio) may have fuelled fresh interest in Henry during 1632.

¹⁴⁰ A. W. Pollard and G. H. Redgrave, *A Short Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, 1475-1640* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1956), p. 494.

¹⁴¹ In 1623 Dering paid two pounds for two 'volumes of Shakespear's playes'. [Gibson, *REED: East Kent*, forthcoming.]

¹⁴² According to Bradley's calculations, Shakespeare's play requires at least 21 players, while he estimates that 15 people could perform Rowley's play. [Bradley, p. 237, p. 239.]

¹⁴³ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. xxi.

observes: 'Recusants were thickest on the ground in the southern and western deaneries of Warrington and Amounderness [...]. In 1604 recorded recusants accounted for as many as one in nine of the total population of Amounderness and the Warrington figure was one in thirteen'.¹⁴⁴

If the Warrington men were Catholics, they would have found *Henry VIII* far more sympathetic to their religious views, particularly in its favourable depiction of Catherine of Aragon, Henry's Catholic wife. By contrast, Rowley's play has 'a strong Protestant bias'.¹⁴⁵ If the men were recusants, the decision to perform Shakespeare's play during service time on the Sabbath could have been a calculated act of religious subversion or protest.¹⁴⁶ There is, however, no indication in any of the surviving documents that the men were recusants and it is unlikely that such a fact would go unrecorded. For the purposes of the following reconstruction it will therefore be assumed that the men were acting Rowley's play when they were interrupted by the local constables and churchwardens.

The Performance

The Time of the Performance

The performance at Harrison's alehouse was staged on a Sunday afternoon, during service time. The men had begun acting the play in the early afternoon, arriving at the alehouse and seeking Harrison's permission to go up into his loft 'about 12 or one of the Clock'.¹⁴⁷ In beginning their performance around this time, the men were paralleling the practice of many professional troupes when staging afternoon performances.

How much of the play they had managed to act before they were disturbed by the Warrington churchwardens and constables is not clear, as Harrison speaks vaguely of the men being in his upper chamber 'for an oure or two' before the officials' arrival.¹⁴⁸ While the actors only confirm that they 'were in actinge of it' when they were apprehended.¹⁴⁹ Even if the men had been performing for only an hour they could have made considerable headway through the play.

¹⁴⁴ John K. Walton, *Lancashire: A Social History, 1558-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1987), p. 46.

¹⁴⁵ Samuel Rowley, *When You See Me, You Know Me*, ed. by F. P. Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University, 1957), p. x. Hereafter all references to the play will be cited in the text.

¹⁴⁶ This might explain the apparent seriousness with which the case was viewed by the Justice of the Peace and his decision to demand very large bonds for the men's bail.

¹⁴⁷ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 93.

¹⁴⁸ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 96.

¹⁴⁹ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 96.

Indeed, they might have acted as much as half of the play (perhaps reaching the scene in which Henry is in prison after fighting with Black Will while in London in disguise).¹⁵⁰ Had they been acting for two hours they might have been close to completing their performance of the play.

Casting

As the men had agreed in advance upon their performance of the play at Harrison's alehouse, they might also have decided which parts each person was to take. Similarly, each person might have copied out their parts (or been provided with their 'parts' by a nominated scribe), the printed quarto being used as the promptbook.¹⁵¹ Certainly, it is unlikely that each person purchased a copy of the play, and it would have been difficult to act the play if all had to share one copy of it.

Doubling would have been essential as the play contains over fifty roles. According to David Bradley's calculations, some of the 'others' apprehended with the nine men at the alehouse would have been required to act as well, as he estimates that Rowley's play requires a cast of at least fifteen people. It is possible that the other people recruited for the performance or 'reading' included boys.¹⁵²

Whether cast in advance or not, the men may have tried to choose people physically appropriate for certain of the play's parts: for example, the role of Henry VIII might have been given to one of the larger men, in keeping with his description in the play as 'a good lustie tall bigge set man' (*When You See Me*, scene 6, 1209). Similarly, the female roles in the play might have been given to the slighter or younger men among them (or to boys, if the 'others' included such youths).

¹⁵⁰ The arrival of the constables and churchwardens at this moment would have been an unfortunate coincidence.

¹⁵¹ As indicated in previous chapters (e.g. chapter 4), there is evidence of other provincial performers using printed plays in this way (e.g. the Simpson troupe in Yorkshire used printed copies of Shakespeare's *Pericles* and *Lear* for their performances of these plays in the 1610s). [Boddy, p. 16.]

¹⁵² George draws a similar conclusion: 'if a performance occurred or was intended, there must have been another three or four boys to play the women's parts and double as pages, criers, and attendants'. He also suggests that a cast of thirteen would have been sufficient for the play's performance. [George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 337.]

Staging

The Playing Area

There is no evidence that the men set up or used any kind of stage or platform. There are no references to a stage in any of the accounts and it would have been difficult to have brought in or borrowed any materials or objects for the creation of an improvised platform without arousing Harrison's attention. If the loft was not very large, a platform of any kind would have been impractical as well. Instead, the men might have designated part of the chamber a playing area, stepping in and out of the 'place' as they performed their parts, as was apparently conventional when performing interludes in earlier times. As they were performing in the afternoon, artificial lighting was probably not used or necessary.

Playing Gear

Rowley's play does not require any especially elaborate stage furniture or costumes but it does implicitly call for a variety of props (e.g. a horn for Will, a purse and mace for Wolsey, swords, and, more unusually, props such as tennis rackets for the Prince and Marquis in scene ten) and assorted apparel (e.g. fine clothing and a disguise for Henry, cardinals' robes for Wolsey and Bonner, and fine gowns for Jane Seymour, Lady Mary and Katherine Parr).

As the men were not professional players they would not have had a property stock or costume wardrobe upon which they could draw. The Warrington men might have improvised, borrowing or making their own costumes and props, but Harrison gives no indication that the men carried anything with them into his alehouse. Similarly, there are no allusions to the men being apprehended with playing apparel or playing gear. This may mean that the performance was simply 'a dramatic reading'.¹⁵³ However, the fact that the men are described as 'acting' the play suggests that an element of physical performance was involved and that they were not simply reading the play aloud, even if they were not using costumes and props.

Without much staging paraphernalia to consider, the focus of the amateur performers was probably upon the action and spoken delivery of their parts. As amateurs they may have had little or no personal experience of performance, but might have seen plays staged by touring professionals. It would, therefore, be especially fascinating to know what style (or styles of)

¹⁵³ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 337.

acting the men employed and whether they were influenced by the conventions of the contemporary professional stage. Unfortunately, such information is unavailable.

Provided with few textual directions, the men were potentially presented with considerable freedom when choosing how to perform their speeches.¹⁵⁴ At a few points in the play, the Warrington men would have found implicit acting cues in the text. In scene three, for instance, Henry's words reveal that the person playing Jane Seymour's father must feign tears:

King. How shall I ease thy hearts calamitie?

That cannot help thy selfe, how one sad minute

Hath raisd a fount of sorrowe in his eyes,

And bleard his aged cheekes.

[*When You See Me*, 3. 481.]

Similarly, (had they reached scene fourteen) the performer taking Katherine Parr's part would have known to kneel and weep while protesting her innocence of treason before Henry, as he remarks upon her behaviour:

King. Body a me, what euerlasting knaues are these that

wrong thee thus, alas poore *Kate*, come stand vp, stand vp,

wipe thine eyes, wipe thine eyes, fore god 'twas told me

that thou wert a traytor: I could hardly think it.

(own emphasis) [*When You See Me*, 14. 2678.]

However the men chose to act the play (and whichever scene they reached) the fact that they were apprehended while performing indicates that they were absorbed in the performance. Had they been less so the arrival of the constables and churchwardens below might have been noticed,

¹⁵⁴ For some of the men this would have included deciding whether to speak soliloquies directly to the audience (imagined or actual) or to deliver them as though the character were thinking aloud and unaware of the audience. The man taking Black Will's part, for instance, might have addressed his first speech directly to the small audience of spectators (or those men not performing), creating a conspiratorial atmosphere and inviting them to be complicit in his coming deception of the Watch: *Will*. So, now I am got within the cittie, I am as / safe as in a Sanctuarie: it is a hard world, when Blacke Will, for / a venture of fiue pound, must commit such pettie robberies/ at Mile-ende, but the truth is, the stewes from whence I had my / quartaridge is now growne too hote for me. [*When You See Me*, Scene 5. 1062.]

and the men might have disguised the fact that they had been performing before the officers intruded upon them.

The Aftermath of the Performance

How the men reacted to the interruption of the performance and their arrest is unrecorded, but there is no suggestion that they resisted apprehension or denied that they had been acting. The official response to the performance by the Warrington authorities is known. Having been apprehended, the nine men involved in the performance appeared before Thomas Ireland, Justice of the Peace. Before being released the men had to present sizeable bonds for their appearance at 'the next quarter sessions':

A total of £280 was posted by thirteen persons in order to fulfil the requirements of the bonds. Amounts posted for individuals varied between £40, the total posted for Wicke, Wildigge, Rylance, and Choner, and £15, the total posted for Houlbrocke. Four of the nine defendants also posted bail for one another; the other five guarantors tended to be relatives, members of the same trade, or residents of the same town as those for whom they went bail.¹⁵⁵

As George notes: 'These are large sums of money', suggesting that 'the JP took their offence very seriously. He may also have thought some or all of them likely to fail to appear in court.'¹⁵⁶

The account of the trial itself 'has not been found' but a quarter sessions order of 16th July, 1632 refers to its result:

whereas Iohn willie Iohn Smyth Thomas Holbroke William Hardman Roberte wicke william wildigge Randle Rylance Iohn Cadwell & Iohn Choner all of warrington in respect they & euery of them with others were taken by the Constables & Churchwardens of warrington vpon a Saboth day in tyme of divine sermon & service in the afternoone acting a play of henry the eight & for staying in an alehouse contrary to lawe for *which* misdemeanors the *partes* aboue named were bound to answer there contempt & did appeare att this *Sessions* and here receaved condigne punishment In

¹⁵⁵ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 337.

¹⁵⁶ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 337.

respect Whereof this Cort doth order that they & euery of them shall bee ffreed & discharged of & from any further troble in the Deane or ordinaryes Cort for the same offence in respect by lawe they are not to bee punished twice for one offence.¹⁵⁷

That nature of the 'condigne' punishment is not stated. They may only have been fined. There is no evidence that the church courts attempted to present the men as well and no more is heard of the case in the secular courts. Whether any of the men were subsequently involved in amateur dramatics is, likewise, unknown.

However, even as a one-off performance, the acting of *Henry VIII* at Harrison's Warrington alehouse is an intriguing cultural moment. Not only does it provide additional proof that there was cultural interchange between the North and South (London and the regions), but the young men's performance provides further evidence of a thirst for drama at all levels of provincial society in the early seventeenth century. Likewise, the performance demonstrates that even in the 1630s regional communities were not wholly reliant upon visiting or professional players for theatrical entertainment, and local drinking houses continued to be viewed as potential playing places in at least some parts of provincial England.

Some Conclusions

While explicit records of performances in drinking houses may be few, contextual evidence indicates that playing in inns (and occasionally in alehouses and taverns) was not unusual. Indeed, in many parts of the country inns appear to have been one of the 'quasi-public' buildings traditionally used for playing by professional travelling companies and for occasional local dramatic productions. The appropriation of provincial drinking houses as temporary theatres not only parallels dramatic practices in Elizabethan London but, at a time when English drinking houses were increasingly important as social spaces, the accommodation of players and performances at early modern public houses is a further testimony to drama's popularity and perceived cultural importance in the provinces as well as the capital. Equally, that drinking house performances are recorded as late as the 1630s provides further proof that drama continued to flourish in many regions despite the imposition of increasingly strict regulations upon dramatic activity in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

¹⁵⁷ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 337, p. 96.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Provincial Playhouses in Early Modern England, 1559-1625

Purpose-built playhouses¹ (or houses converted into theatres) were 'largely' a 'metropolitan phenomenon' in Elizabethan and Jacobean England.² However, research has identified explicit records of at least three Elizabethan and Jacobean provincial theatres: the Wine Street playhouse in Bristol, the Prescott playhouse in Lancashire, and a theatre in York in 1609.³ Indirect evidence suggests that two further regional playhouses could have existed

¹ In this chapter 'playhouses' are defined as 'buildings built solely or mainly, for the purpose of playing'. [David Galloway, 'Records of Early English Drama in the Provinces and What They May Tell Us About The Elizabethan Theatre,' *The Elizabethan Theatre*, VII, ed. by G. R. Hibbard (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 93.] The first playhouses built in London in the 1560s and 1570s may have been intended and used for a wider variety of entertainments (including bear baiting, fencing and puppet plays), in keeping with the more general meaning that the word 'play' could possess in the period. As late as 1614 Philip Henslowe and Edward Alleyn chose to erect the Hope theatre as a dual-purpose playhouse (for plays and bear-baiting). However, by the end of the sixteenth century 'playhouses' were being used primarily as dramatic venues and new playhouses such as the Globe were built exclusively as theatrical houses.

² John Astington, *The Development of Shakespeare's Theater* (New York: AMS Press, 1992), p. 6.

³ Claims for the existence of a number of other provincial Elizabethan and Jacobean playhouses have been made, but subsequent research has revealed these claims to be unsubstantiated or erroneous. In *Annals of the English Stage* (1908), for instance, R. J. Broadbent suggested that a cockpit built in Liverpool in 1567 was later converted and used as a playhouse in the sixteenth-century town. His grounds for suggesting that the 1567 cockpit 'may have been employed' as a playhouse 'as early as the sixteenth century' derived from his identification of the 1567 building with the later Cock-pit-in-the-yard, used for plays in the late seventeenth century. However, as David George has shown there is no evidence to support the identification of the two cockpits or to prove that the 1567 cockpit was used for plays: his claims are 'undocumented'. [David George, 'Early Playhouses at Liverpool', *Theatre Notebook*, 43 (1989), 9-16 (p. 15, p. 12).]

Similarly, there is no evidence that there was a playhouse in Elizabethan Eccleston (Lancashire), as was alleged by a reporter in the Liverpool "Daily Mail". [Cited in *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Lancaster*, III, ed. by William Farrer and J. Brownbill (London: Constable, 1908; repr. Folkestone: Dawsons, 1991), p. 363.] Indeed, it is likely that the playhouse identified by the reporter was that built in neighbouring Prescott on Eccleston Street.

It is worth noting that although there were few purpose-built or converted playhouses in the Elizabethan and Jacobean provinces, there were other permanent provincial playing spaces, such as the open-air 'plain an gwarry' of Cornwall and 'game places', as recorded at Great Yarmouth, Wymondham and Walsham-le-Willows. In other places, there were similar open-air recreational sites known as 'camping closes'. These were usually field spaces (often enclosed) and were primarily used for playing 'an energetic and dangerous sport called "camping", which was a cross between football and handball'. These 'closes' might be used occasionally for other recreations. [David Dymond, 'God's Disputed Acre', unpublished paper, 1997, 1-31 (p. 17).] Such outdoor recreational sites have a long tradition in many parts of England. Often round in shape, game places were used for activities of various kinds in different parts of the country, including ball games (e.g. football), archery, wrestling matches and dramatic performances. In Cornwall, Sir Richard Carew described the use of a 'plain an gwarry' for the performance of a Cornish miracle play. [Treve Holman, 'Cornish Plays and Playing Places', *Theatre Notebook*, 4 (1949-50), 52-4 (p. 53).]

In some cases, these intriguing outdoor theatres appear to have been specially fitted with permanent raised areas or stages for use in play performances. The 'Game place' at Walsham-le-Willows, for example, was (c. 1577) 'a place compassed round with a fayer banke cast vp in a good height & havinge [...] many great trees called populers growynge about the same banke, in the myddest a fayre round place of earth wythe a stone wall about the same to the height of the earth

between 1559-1625 as well.⁴ The 1637 will of Sarah Barker alludes to a playhouse on the outskirts of Bristol (built by her late husband) which may have operated prior to 1625, and it

made on purpose for the vse of stage playes.' (own emphasis) [Kenneth M. Dodd, 'Another Elizabethan Theater in the Round,' *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 21 (1970), 125-156 (p. 126).] Meanwhile, an entry in the Corporation Assembly Books at Shrewsbury in 1574-5 might 'refer to a stage erected for playing in the "quarry"'. [REED: *Shropshire*, ed. by J. Alan B. Somerset, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1994), II, p. 664.] (The 'quarry' was a large, grass amphitheatre on the outskirts of the town, which survives today as a park. It was the setting for a number of famous Elizabethan productions of neo-Christian plays written and stage-managed by local playwright and schoolmaster, Thomas Ashton.) The entry records that, 'they be agreed at this assemblye that wheras the frame of timber that stood in the quarell behind the walles is taken downe that the same tymber shall presentlye be deliuered to the scholmaster to the vse of the scholl <.> accordinglye as mr ashton hathe at this tyme written'. [REED: *Shropshire*, ed. by J. Alan B. Somerset, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1994), I, p. 220.] These open-air playing or game places cannot be described as 'playhouses' and therefore are not considered in the main body of the chapter.

⁴ There is evidence of a further provincial playhouse, owned by Sir John Deane's grammar school in Northwich (Cheshire), but this appears to post-date 1625 and therefore is not considered in the main text. The only evidence of the playhouse's existence appears to be two intriguing allusions in the school accounts for 1637. Five shillings was 'spent by Mr Winnington and myself when we sett the playhouse to be repaired'; and four pounds and eleven pence was spent upon 'makeinge one brick chimney with three pipes and stone for silling one side of the play house with barridges'. [Marjorie Cox, *History of Sir John Deane's Grammar School* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1975), p. 59.] The location of the playhouse 'is not specified', as Cox notes, 'but various factors establish that it was in Chester [where the school is known to have owned property], and the chances are that it was in one of the two inns owned by the school, since dramatic performances frequently took place in inn yards and buildings connected with inns.' [Cox, p. 59.]

The inns referred to by Cox were the Saracen's Head ('an inn situated on the north side of Foregate Street) and the Swan ('on the south side of Foregate Street'). [Cox, p. 58, p. 60.] The school also owned a third Chester property known as Ball's Croft. (Ball's Croft 'is now part of Grosvenor Park'.) [Cox, p. 60.] The Saracen's Head was a large property: 'the site covered an area of 10 roods by 4 (a rood here meaning six to 8 yards) and the size of the building can be judged from the fact that it had 53 bays.' [Cox, p. 58.] In 1606 the building was in a state of disrepair. A survey which 'referred to it as a "antient Inn house" [...] listed a formidable number of "decays and ruins".' [Cox, p. 59.] If the playhouse was created within or from the Saracen's Head, it was presumably established post-1606, when the building is recorded as being in decay. It is possible that an 'old Hall' referred to in the survey was repaired and adapted as an indoor theatre of the kind found at the second Blackfriars theatre in London.

The other possible locations for the playhouse, the Swan and Ball's Croft, were 'of considerably less value than the Saracen's Head', and the Swan was smaller than the Saracen's Head, although it was apparently in better condition in the Jacobean period, as 'the survey of 1606 listed "no decays"', and 'the only expenditure (unless the "playhouse" was there) [was] 28s 6d for building a brick chimney for the feoffees chamber in 1611.' [Cox, p. 60.] In the early seventeenth century, the smallest returns were generated by the Ball's Croft property. However, the property had a powerful tenant between 1634 and 1641, the Earl of Derby. [Cox, p. 60.] Given the 6th Earl's known interest in drama and his possible involvement in the establishment of an earlier provincial playhouse at Prescott, Lancashire (see pp. 363-4), one wonders whether the playhouse mentioned in the Sir John Deane's Grammar School records was established at Ball's Croft (post-1634) at the Earl's suggestion or under his supervision. Notably, in his account of the Stanley family, Barry Coward suggests that the Earl may have been involved in theatrical ventures in Chester during this period, having retired from the management of the family estates: 'The earl was still active as lieutenant [of Lancashire and Cheshire], but seems to have spent most of his time at Chester and Bidston on building, and perhaps also on theatrical and literary projects, leaving the care of his estate to his son. [Barry Coward, *The Stanleys: Lords Stanley and Earls of Derby, 1385-1672. The Origins, Wealth and Power of a Landowning Family*, Chetham Society, XXX (Manchester: Manchester University, 1983), p. 57.] As the school owned all three Chester properties during the late sixteenth

is possible that the 'game place house', in Great Yarmouth, mentioned as early as 1538, was used by players in the early and later sixteenth century.⁵ Evidence of other Elizabethan and Jacobean provincial theatres may emerge as research in early modern regional archives continues.

Provincial playhouses and their historiography

The existence of the Prescott playhouse in Lancashire was first discussed in detail in 1952, when F. A. Bailey published his article, 'The Elizabethan Playhouse at Prescott, Lancashire' in *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*.⁶ While, the York and Wine Street, Bristol playhouses were identified and discussed in 1975 in Kathleen M. D. Barker's, *Theatre Notebook* article, 'An Early Seventeenth Century Provincial Playhouse' (and its postscript by Sybil Rosenfeld).⁷ However, like many other aspects of theatre outside London in the early modern period, these regional playhouses have received relatively little scholarly attention. Indeed, most histories of Elizabethan and Jacobean theatres persist in ignoring their existence. However, our understanding of Elizabethan and Jacobean playhouses and their development will not be complete if the playhouses of the provinces are not taken into consideration, and the following chapter therefore focuses upon the history of the few recorded provincial theatres in England between 1559-1625.

The emergence of regional playhouses

That there were few provincial English playhouses between 1559-1625 is less surprising when one considers that the population and wealth of even the largest regional towns was much smaller than that of London. While London's inhabitants totalled around 200,000 at the end of the sixteenth century, there were only a few provincial towns with a population larger than 10,000. 'The vast majority lay within the 800-1,500 range'.⁸ A playhouse in any

and early seventeenth centuries, the playhouse could have been created in, or from, any of them. Without further evidence it is impossible to determine the playhouse's location or to establish when it was built or converted. Indeed, we cannot even be certain that the 'playhouse' was used for play performances. However, if the playhouse was used as a theatre (in the Caroline period), it was an innovative venture, theatres not becoming more numerous in regional English towns until the late seventeenth century.

⁵ REED: *Bristol*, ed. by Mark C. Pilkinton (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1997), pp. 242-3.

John Wasson and David Galloway, eds, 'Records of Plays and Players in Norfolk and Suffolk, 1330-1642', *Malone Society: Collections*, XI (Oxford: Oxford University, 1981), p. 14.

⁶ The article appears in volume 103 (1952), pp. 69-81.

⁷ Barker's article appears in volume 29 (1975), pp. 81-4.

⁸ Robin Clifton, 'The Court about 1600', a lecture given before MA students in the Centre for the Study of the Renaissance, University of Warwick, 28th November, 1995.

Robert Tittler, *Architecture and Power: The Town Hall and the English Urban Community, c. 1500-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1991), p. 19.

of England's early modern towns was therefore less likely to be a lucrative enterprise than a theatre in the capital. Regional towns and their surrounding populations were not great enough to provide the kind of large, regular, and profitable audiences afforded by the metropolitan community. [As Gurr notes: 'from 1574 to 1642 the London playhouses found their audiences amongst a population between 150,000 and 200,000 people', and were apparently being 'visited by about 15,000 people weekly' in 1595.]⁹

Raising the money to build a playhouse or to convert an existing building into a theatre was also potentially more difficult in a provincial town. It could be a costly business and called for economic confidence in a theatre's viability. When James Burbage built The Theatre, for instance, in Shoreditch in 1576, it cost between five hundred and a thousand pounds, while, 'to build the Fortune in 1600 cost £520'.¹⁰ In provincial towns there were generally fewer wealthy people who could be approached to act as investors in such a venture (even if it was a less ambitious theatre-building project than the kind pursued by people like Burbage in London). At the same time, a provincial playhouse was a less attractive investment: a good return upon one's investment was less certain.

It is probably no coincidence that two of the three provincial towns explicitly recorded as being home to an Elizabethan or Jacobean playhouse were among England's largest and wealthiest regional towns. Robert Tittler highlights the regional importance of Bristol and York, when he describes them and Norwich as being: 'the three "miniature Londons" of the north, west, and east respectively, [...] serving as the provincial capitals of England'.¹¹ John Patten also describes Bristol and York (with Norwich) as 'the provincial centres' of sixteenth century England.¹²

⁹ Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1970), p. 141.

¹⁰ Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages, 1300-1600*, 4 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959-81), II: ii (1972), p. 15.

Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 50.

¹¹ Tittler, p. 40.

¹² John Patten, *English Towns, 1500-1700* (Folkestone: Dawson; Hamden, Connecticut: Archon, 1978), p. 112.

However, population size and wealth were evidently not the only factors in the emergence of the few early modern provincial theatres in England. Otherwise, one would have expected Norwich (or another large regional town) to be the home of the third known regional theatre in this period, rather than a small Lancashire market town, such as Prescott. Unlike York and Bristol, early modern Prescott was neither a large nor wealthy town. Indeed, with a population of only 'a little more than 400 people c. 1592', it was really a village; and in 1586 'it was reported that there were in Prescott "one hundred and five severall families, amonge which ther be scarce xx that be able to helpe themselves without begginge"', indicating that the residents were mainly poor. However, the town was on the road between two large and locally important towns, Liverpool and Warrington, and, as a result, was visited by a steady stream of non-residents. The town's proximity to Knowsley Hall, one

There may be another reason for the establishment of few provincial playhouses in early modern England. There was perhaps not the same impetus to provide buildings exclusively for theatrical use in most regional communities. While in London increasing restrictions upon where and when playing companies could perform within the City walls encouraged players and theatrical entrepreneurs to provide alternative playing venues, beyond the immediate control of the Corporation (e.g. in the Liberties), in most Elizabethan and Jacobean regional towns a number of urban spaces continued to be readily available for play performances (e.g. town halls, churches, inns). Even those towns which paralleled the metropolitan corporation in introducing stricter regulations regarding theatrical activity, did not usually prevent the use of venues such as inns, as occurred in late sixteenth century London. At the same time, it would have been difficult to gain official local authorisation to build or convert a playhouse in some provincial towns. In Cambridge and Oxford, the University authorities had obtained Privy Council letters permitting them to prohibit play performances within five miles of their precincts.¹³

II- The Playhouses: Individual Case Studies

In the following section, the theatrical history of each of the clearly recorded Elizabethan and Jacobean regional playhouses (and the evidence for their existence and operation) is surveyed and considered in relation to metropolitan theatres and dramatic culture. The second Bristol playhouse and the Great Yarmouth 'game place house' are considered in section III, as properties possibly active as playhouses at some point in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period.

the country seats of the powerful and 'drama-loving' Stanleys (Earls of Derby), may have provided a more specific reason for the erection of a playhouse in Prescott. [David George, ed. *REED: Lancashire* (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1991), p. xliv.] According to Leland, Knowsley park was 'within a mile of Prestcod'. [John Leland, *Leland's Itinerary in England and Wales*, V, ed. by Lucy Toulmin Smith (London: Centaur, 1964), p. 42.]

¹³ In Oxford the ban on 'Common Stage players' performing within a five-mile radius of the University was first instituted by the University in 1584 and renewed in 1593 in a letter from the Privy Council. [Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), p. 164.] In Cambridge the University authorities tried to introduce a prohibition upon public playing within five miles of its precincts as early as 1568-9. In 1575 the Privy Council lent their support, sending the University a Letter authorising them to prevent 'any manner of vnlefull games [...], nether yet any assemblies in open places of multitudes of people' within 'that Vniuersitie and Towne, or within five miles compasse'. [*REED: Cambridge*, ed. by Alan H. Nelson, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1989), I, pp. 276-7.]

i- The Wine Street Playhouse, Bristol

The existence of a Renaissance playhouse in Wine Street, Bristol was noted as early as 1906 by Alfred Harvey. He reported how, in the sixteenth century, 'plays were acted at the Guildhall, but at an early date a permanent building was erected for the drama in Wine Street.'¹⁴ Fuller documentation of the playhouse and its functioning has been provided in more recent years by scholars such as Kathleen M. D. Barker and Mark C. Pilkinton (the editor of the Bristol *REED* collection).¹⁵

References to the playhouse have been found in a number of contemporary sources, including the Mayor's Audits, the accounts of Queen Elizabeth's Hospital (as preserved in an antiquarian transcription), and the churchwarden's accounts of St John the Baptist's almshouse. As Pilkinton reports, the Mayor's Audits 'refer directly to the playhouse in Wine Street'.¹⁶ The first allusion to the theatre dates from 1626, when the Audits record a payment to the corporation of a 'v s.' quit rent on the property:

winestreete

...

Item a quitt rent out of a tenement sometimes a play house paide by the heires of Nicholas Woulfe.¹⁷

Similar payments occur in the corporate records for a further six years (from 1626-1631). Thereafter the payments disappear and there is no mention of the playhouse, Woolfe, or his heirs.

¹⁴ Alfred Harvey, *Bristol: A Historical and Topographical Account of the City* (London: Methuen, 1906), p. 247.

¹⁵ In her article upon, 'An Early Seventeenth Century Provincial Playhouse', Kathleen Barker recorded how Bristol cutler, Nicholas Woolfe established the playhouse in Wine Street, citing evidence such as the series of annuities paid to Queen Elizabeth's hospital from the proceedings of the playhouse (between 1614-1619). She suggested that the playhouse opened between 1598-1602 and closed between 1619-1620.

Mark C. Pilkinton reconsidered the evidence relating to the Wine Street playhouse discussed by Barker and presented new evidence relating to its existence and operation in his *Theatre Notebook* article, 'The Playhouse in Wine Street, Bristol', 37 (1983), pp. 14-21. Pilkinton contributed another article, 'New Information on the Playhouse in Wine Street, Bristol', *Theatre Notebook*, 42 (1988), pp. 73-5.

¹⁶ Pilkinton, 'The Playhouse', p. 16.

¹⁷ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 224.

The original early modern accounts of Queen Elizabeth's Hospital in Bristol are not extant, but a nineteenth century transcription of the records has survived. This lists 'a series of thirty shilling annual payments made to the Hospital' from the playhouse, 'ending on Michaelmas (September 29) 1619.'¹⁸ (As will be seen below, these payments were made in accordance with a bequest included in Nicholas Woolfe's will of 1614).

The accounts of St John the Baptist's almshouse provide similar evidence of the theatre's existence. They, too, record annual payments from the Wine street playhouse to the almshouse over a series of years. (Again, the payments to the almshouse fulfil the terms of a bequest made in Woolfe's will). In this instance, the first reference to the playhouse, and the receipt of an annuity from the property, occurs in 1615. The accounts record the receipt of five shillings as an 'anuytie out of the playhouse in Wynestreet in Bristoll'.¹⁹ The payments continue 'until 5 March 1621 during which time the building clearly operated as a playhouse in accordance with the provisions of the will'.²⁰ After this date the receipts from the playhouse cease to appear for a time. In March 1625, a new pattern of payments emerges, reference being made to an expected 'quitt Rent out of the Playhouse' (although this does not appear to have been paid in 1625).²¹ As Pilkinton records: 'By Christmas of the same year, annual rent receipts reappeared and continued until Christmas 1628', but 'no payments to the almshouse' are recorded, suggesting that 'the playhouse once again operated but raising serious questions as to whether it did so fully in accordance with the conditions of Nicholas Woolfe's will'.²²

More detailed evidence relating to the playhouse is to be found in Richard Cooke's 1606 replication against Nicholas Woolfe, the playhouse's proprietor, Nicholas Woolfe's will (2 June, 1614), and in the answers of Margaret Woolfe (Nicholas' widow) and Henry Yate to a suit made against Mrs. Woolfe by Miles Woolfe (Woolfe's son) in 1618-9.

¹⁸ Pilkinton, 'The Playhouse', p. 14.

¹⁹ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 205.

²⁰ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 205.

²¹ These records suggest that the playhouse was operating 'from Christmas 1614 to 5 March 1621 in complete accord with the Woolfe bequest. After 5 March 1621 and until 5 March 1624, the accounts indicate that the playhouse was not operating, although it is the 5 March 1625 entries which categorically confirm at least for that year, the cessation of operation'. [Pilkinton, 'The Playhouse', p. 19.]

²² Pilkinton, 'The Playhouse', p. 19.

Cooke's replication of 1606 was a 'detailed restatement' of 'charges made against Nicholas Woolfe and his wife' and is 'one of four surviving documents' from Cooke's suit against the Woolfes.²³ Woolfe appears to have leased the Wine Street building which housed the playhouse to Cooke for a six month period (c. 1604) 'for a somme of ffive powndes'.²⁴ At a later date Cooke,

mynded to Remove from the *defendants* house and settle himself & his famelye in the said castell [and] did make the said woulfe acquainted therewith and withall sent him worde by his servant Peter Hawkesworth that he this *Complainant* would lett or assigne his said Interest & terme vnto some other.²⁵

Rather than have the house let to another, Woolfe apparently asked that he,

might have the said house and terme soe lett by him vnto this *Complainant* againe to his owne vse to lett & bestowe of & for the finishinge and concluding of the same he woulde the next daie come to this *Complainantes* house and take order for the Repayment of the money which the said *Complainant* had disbursed for the same.²⁶

Woolfe did not refund Cooke's five pounds and various wranglings ensued, culminating in Cooke's decision to lodge a legal complaint against Woolfe. However, what is most intriguing about Cooke's replication in the context of this chapter, is the insight which he provides into the make-up of the property and its use by players. The following passage in the replication is especially illuminating, providing clear evidence that plays were being staged in Woolfe's Wine street property as early as 1604-5:

the said *defendants* [...] lodged sundrie persons of all sortes many tymes during the *Complainantes* terme besides certaine comedyantes whome he suffered to act and playe within the said Roomes for which the said *defendants* tooke moneye.²⁷

²³ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 292.

The other surviving documents from the suit 'are Cooke's original bill of complaint to the Court of Requests [...], a writ allowing local Bristol officials to take Woolfe's response, and Woolfe's response'. These other documents apparently contain no allusion to the 'Comedyantes'. [Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 292.]

²⁴ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 161.

²⁵ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 161.

²⁶ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 161.

Woolfe's will of 1614 alludes directly to his ownership of a playhouse in Wine Street and to its use for plays. I quote the passages alluding to the playhouse at length:

ffirst I geve and bequeath to the Churchwardens and parishioners of the parishe of Christ Church to the vse of the poor people of the same parishe for euer one Annuitie or yearely rent of vjs: viijd. to bee yearely yssueinge and payable out of my Play house in wynestreete within the said Cittie of Bristoll, Item I give and bequeath to the Churchwardens and parishioners of the parishe of St Peeters within the said Cittie to the vse of the poore people of the same parishe for ever one Annuitie or yeerely Rente of vjs. viijd. to be yearely yssueinge and payeable out of my said Play house, Item I give to the Master and Companie of the Cuttlers and Smythes of the said Cittie towardes the mayntenance of their hall for euer one Annuitie or yearely Rente of Six shillinges & eighte pence to be yearely yssueinge and payable out of my said Playe house. Item I give and bequeath to the poore prisoners of the Gaole of Newegate within the said Cittie of Bristoll vjs. viijd. to be yearely yssueing and payeable out of my said play house. Item I geve and bequeath to the vse of the relieffe and mayntenance of the poore Children of the hospitall of the said Cittie of Bristoll for euer one Auunitie or yearely Rente of xxxs. to be yeerely yssueinge and payeable out of my said play house, Item I geve and bequeath [...] to the poore people of the Almes house of St Iohns within the said Cittie of Bristoll one Annuitie or yeerely Rente of v s: to bee yearely yssueinge and payeable for euer out of my said Playe house, Item I geve and bequeath to the poore people of the Almes house of St Michaelles within the subvrbes of the said Cittie of Bristoll for euer one Annuitie or yeerely Rente of vs. to bee yearely yssueinge and payeable out of my said playe house, provided allwayes and it is my treue entente and meaninge That all Thannuities and yeerely Rentes before mencioned and lymitted to bee paid out of my said playe house shall continewe due and payeable soe longe only as the same house shall continewe a playe house at that such players as doe resorte to the said Cittie or inhabite within the same doe vsually playe there and maye be permitted & suffered quietly to play there.²⁸

²⁷ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 164.

²⁸ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, pp. 196-7.

The answers which Margaret Woolfe and Henry Yate (one of the overseers of Nicholas Woolfe's will) made to Miles Woolfe's suit against Woolfe's widow in 1618-19 allude to the playhouse more briefly but provide further clues about its make-up and history. Margaret Woolfe testified that:

She dothe not know that the said nicholas woolfe in the bill named was in his life tyme seised in fee, or of any othere state of inheritance of or in any houses groundes, landes or Tenementes within the cittie of Bristoll or elsewhere bot onlie of one messuage or tenement in Bristoll wherein the said Nicholas dwelled at the tyme of his deathe, and of one house with thappurtenaunces in wynestreete within the said cittie commonlie called the play house.²⁹

What survives of Yate's answer (2 October, 1619) is more fragmentary, but includes an intriguing allusion to a 'stage' in the playhouse:

the tenementes & estates thereof are as followeth first the said Margrett Wo<.>fe is to <...> and parcell of the house called the playhouse <...> <....> for the vse of the stage in the said playho<...> wh<...> <...>...Richard hopkins for a shopp parcell of the said playhouse in his possession as tenant at will per an<no. xxijs...>.³⁰

Although the body of evidence described above is small, it contains various pieces of information about the playhouse. This primary material can be supplemented with evidence drawn from wider sources of information about early modern Bristol and theatrical activity within its precincts. These combined sources are the basis for the account of the playhouse offered below.

Reconstructing the Theatrical History of the Wine Street Playhouse

Location

All of the sources agree that the playhouse was in Wine Street, in central Bristol. Identifying which building in the street housed the playhouse has proved more difficult, especially as Woolfe appears to have leased or owned several properties in the street. In 1598, for instance, Woolfe leased a house in Wine Street (with 'an adjoining strip of land 16 feet deep'), owned by Christ Church, for forty-one years. [This is the property shown as number seven in

²⁹ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 212.

³⁰ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, pp. 213-4.

SOME DIAGRAMS
EXCLUDED ON
INSTRUCTION FROM
THE UNIVERSITY

Whether the playhouse was housed in number seven Wine Street (the house Woolfe leased from Christ Church in 1598), or based in a third, unidentified Wine Street property is impossible to establish. Kathleen Barker assumes that the Christ Church property (No. 7) was that used for the theatre.³⁷ Mark Pilkinton, however, notes that this Christ Church property was described in 1637 as a 'dwelling house' (when it was leased to tailor, Anthony Basset), and in 1639, as a 'house', a fact which could indicate that the property had not been used recently as a playhouse.³⁸ This might mean that no. 7 was Woolfe's dwelling house, while a third Wine Street property functioned as the playhouse. However, the description of the property as a dwelling house in 1637 does not preclude its earlier use as a playhouse (e.g. one might expect the property to be described as a domestic habitation if the playhouse was promptly reconverted to domestic use following its closure in the 1620s and had therefore been used as a dwelling house for over ten years). Hence, no. 7 Wine Street remains a strong candidate for identification as the playhouse (and the rebuilding of the property between 1598-1602 might have included preparing part of it for theatrical use).

The Establishment of the Playhouse

Nicholas Woolfe, the Bristol cutler responsible for establishing the Wine Street playhouse, had 'no apparent theatrical connections' or any obvious special interest in drama.³⁹ It is striking to find such a figure opening one of the earliest regional English playhouses. As Pilkinton observes, it is probably, 'an indication that it was a business opportunity as much as an artistic endeavour'.⁴⁰ In this respect, Woolfe would have had much in common with many of the people responsible for building London playhouses. A number of the early theatre entrepreneurs were, like Woolfe, tradesmen or craftsmen by profession (e.g. John Cholmley, who funded the erection of the Rose playhouse with Philip Henslowe, was a grocer).⁴¹ In setting up an indoor playhouse Woolfe was also paralleling the example of entrepreneurs such as Richard Farrant and James Burbage (responsible, respectively, for establishing the first and second Blackfriars playhouses) and anticipating the fashion for indoor theatres which was to prevail in the Jacobean metropolis.⁴²

³⁷ Barker, *Bristol at Play*, p. 3.

³⁸ Pilkinton, 'The Playhouse', p. 16.

³⁹ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. xxxviii.

In his will he does not mention owning any play books and does not bequeath any plays or playing gear to anyone.

⁴⁰ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. xxxviii.

⁴¹ Jean Wilson, *The Archaeology of Shakespeare: The Material Legacy of Shakespeare's Theatre* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1995), p. 59.

⁴² By the Caroline period there were more indoor than open-air theatres in London, and after the Civil War the only playhouses to reopen (excluding the briefly reopened Red Bull playhouse) were hall theatres.

Bristol was regularly visited in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries by professional acting companies. Woolfe may have hoped to provide a central, readily available venue for these visiting troupes and for local players. Certainly, in his will he appears to anticipate that local and visiting troupes will use the playhouse in the future, specifying that all the annuities payable from the playhouse should apply 'soe longe only as the same house shall continewe a playe house at that such players as doe resorte to the said cittie or inhabite within the same doe vsually playe there'.⁴³ He may also have been aware that it had become more difficult to gain permission to perform at the guildhall, a venue for many performances in the earlier Elizabethan period. In 1585 the Common Council had passed an ordinance stating that:

noe mayor of this Cytie shall lycense or permytte any players whatsoever to playe in the Guildhall of Bristoll at any tyme hereafter, vpon the like payne of xl s. to be payde by the Mayor as afforesaid vnles suche players doe playe there before the Mayor and his Bretherne.⁴⁴

[It is perhaps worth noting that there are no references to performances in the Guildhall after 1597; and between '10 September 1600' and 'Christmas 1608, the Chamberlain recorded no payments to players, an unusual circumstance since there were five such payments in 1600 before 10 September'.⁴⁵ The establishment of Woolfe's playhouse may have contributed to the decline in productions hosted in the guildhall and sponsored by the corporation.]

The date of the playhouse's establishment

The date of the playhouse's establishment in Wine Street is not explicitly recorded, neither is the date of its closure. Kathleen Barker suggests that the playhouse 'opened between 1598 and 1602 and closed between September 1619 and April 1620'.⁴⁶ However, additional

⁴³ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, pp. 196-7.

Pilkinton interprets this clause in the will slightly differently. He argues that in sanctioning the use of the theatre by players who 'inhabite within the same', Woolfe was authorising its use by players who also lived (or inhabited) the building: 'While the Cooke lawsuit makes it clear that players had resided in the playhouse in the past, the intent of Woolfe's will is that they should be allowed to do so in the future.' [Pilkinton, 'New Information', pp. 74-4.] I interpret Woolfe's phrasing more generally, and believe that he was authorising the use of the playhouse by players living in the town of Bristol.

⁴⁴ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 129.

⁴⁵ Pilkinton, 'The Playhouse', p. 17.

⁴⁶ This suggested opening date is based upon the assumption that the playhouse was housed in the Wine Street property which Woolfe leased from Christ Church in 1598, and which he was authorised to rebuild during the following four years. She assumes that the playhouse closed

Leech's reconstruction of the street's medieval and early modern topography (see plate 53)].³¹ The lease authorised Woolfe, 'to New buyld the said Tenemente and everye parte thereof with thappurtenances within foure yeares nexte ensuinge the date hereof', and included permission for 'the rearinge up higher' of the tenement.³²

Woolfe also appears to have leased a shop on Wine Street from Christ Church. This property appears as number two on Leech's map (see plate 53). In his will he bequeathed his interest in a 'little shoppe vnder Christes Church' to Isaac Woolfe. In 1661, number two Wine Street was described as being 'the shop late of Isaac Wolfe cutler'. It is fairly safe to assume that the small shop which Nicholas bequeathed to Isaac was number two Wine Street.³³

The evidence of Woolfe's will and his widow's answer to the suit of his son, Miles Woolfe (1618-19), suggests that Woolfe may have owned or leased a third property in the street, although the location of this third building remains unknown. Margaret Woolfe spoke of her husband owning or leasing only two properties at his death, both possibly in Wine Street: a 'dwelling house' (in which she and Nicholas lived at the time of his demise) and 'one house with thappurtenaunces in wynestrete [...] commonlie called the play house'.³⁴ Woolfe's will, likewise, mentions the playhouse in Wine street and a dwelling house (including a shop). The latter is presumably the dwelling house described by Margaret Woolfe. He also mentions a 'little shoppe vnder Christes Church', bequeathing it to Isaac Woolfe; and a 'greate shopp'.³⁵ The former has been identified as the Wine Street property later associated with Isaac Woolfe (number two). The location of the 'greate shopp' is not recorded. It does not appear to have occupied a separate property; but may have been the shop which Woolfe described as forming part of the dwelling house which he shared with his wife.³⁶

³¹ Cited in Kathleen Barker, *Bristol at Play* (Bradford-upon-Avon: Moonraker Press, 1976), p. 3. Roger H. Leech, *The Topography of Medieval and Early Modern Bristol. Part One: Property Holdings in the Early Walled Town and Marsh Suburb North of the Avon*, Bristol Record Society, XLVIII (Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 1997), p. xxii.

³² Pilkinton, 'The Playhouse', p. 14.

Leech, p. 172.

³³ Leech, p. 171.

³⁴ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 212.

³⁵ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 197.

³⁶ At the end of his will, Woolfe describes those parts of his house which he has bequeathed to his wife and mentions there being a shop in the property: 'That parte of my House which I haue appoynted & bequeathed to my wyffe duringe her liffe I doe nominate and appoynte to be these parcells followinge vizt the vse of the kytchen & alsoe shall enioy the great parlor ouer the shopp & and the Chamber wherein she doth vsually ly & the forestreete Chamber'. (own emphasis) [Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 199.]

primary evidence uncovered by Mark Pilkinton in the Mayor's Audits and in the accounts of St John the Baptist's Churchwardens has prompted him to revise Barker's dates: 'The surviving evidence suggests that the playhouse in Wine Street could have opened as early as 1604 and most probably closed in 1625'.⁴⁷

The make-up of the playhouse

There are no plans or detailed descriptions of the playhouse, but the surviving documents do provide some information about its make-up. Richard Cooke's replication reveals that the property was entered by a lockable outer door and contained a number of chambers. (He refers to yielding to Woolfe 'the keys [...] out of the outer Dore of the Roomes of the said house'.)⁴⁸ He also observes that the Wine Street property incorporated 'one little studye or Countinge house & one garret or worke house'.⁴⁹ These parts of the property were not included in the lease. Even more intriguingly, Cooke suggests that more than one room may have been used for playing. He described how during the term of his lease (c. 1604), 'certaine Comedyantes' were 'suffered to act and playe within the said Roomes' (own emphasis).⁵⁰ He may have been using the term 'Roomes' as a general synonym for the property or to indicate that more than one chamber was used.⁵¹

Henry Yate's later allusion to the 'stage' in the playhouse (in 1619) suggests that one room was specifically converted into a theatre at some point.⁵² For while it is not impossible that the 'stage' referred to was a demountable scaffold that could be moved between different rooms in the house, it is more likely to have been a scaffold fitted at one end of a particular room (possibly in the 'hall' that town houses usually possessed at this date). In converting

c. 1619-1620 because the last payment from the playhouse to Queen Elizabeth's hospital was made at Michaelmas, 1619.

[Cited in Pilkinton, 'The Playhouse', p. 14, p. 15.]

⁴⁷ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. xxxvii.

⁴⁸ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 164.

⁴⁹ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 161.

⁵⁰ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 164.

⁵¹ There are precedents for such general use of the term 'rooms'. When the residents of Blackfriars 'addressed a petition to the privy Council' opposing the opening of Burbage's Blackfriars playhouse in 1596, they asked the Council to 'take order that the same rooms may be converted to some other use, and that no playhouse may be used or kept there'. [Irwin Smith, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse* (London: Peter Owen, 1966), p. 172.] If more than one chamber was being used, it would suggest that the rooms were not specially or permanently fitted up for playing, as it would have been costly to create more than one 'theatre' (e.g. there may not have been a stage or permanent seating). It could also mean that Woolfe had not converted the building into a permanent playhouse at this date and that he was simply renting players empty chambers on a casual basis. His decision to make the house into a full-time playing venue may have been inspired by the success of this casual theatrical venture.

⁵² Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 214.

only one room of a larger building into a playhouse, while continuing to use surrounding rooms as accommodation, Woolfe's project would not have been unusual. When Richard Farrant set up his indoor theatre in the old Buttery of the ex-Blackfriars monastery in London (1576), he created the playhouse by knocking two smaller rooms into one, and used remaining parts of the property which he had leased from Sir William More for other purposes, as Smith records: 'Farrant's holdings [...] stretched far to the south, beyond the reach of immediate theatrical needs, in the 110-foot-long eastern half of the Parliament Chamber. There he perhaps had living quarters for his wife and family when they came to London from their home in New Windsor, and dormitories and classrooms for the child actors.'⁵³

The size of the theatre

Without any plans or descriptions to guide us, and unable to identify definitively which Wine Street property housed the playhouse, it is impossible to calculate the size of the room(s) used by players. However, if the playhouse was in number 7, Wine Street we can at least suggest the likely maximum size of the playhouse. Drawing upon various medieval and early modern records, Roger Leech has prepared reconstructed maps of central Bristol's streets during this period (showing the number and size of the buildings upon each road). According to his plan of Wine Street, property number 7 measured approximately 10 metres x 3 metres and 12 1/2 centimetres (33 feet, 4 in. x 10 feet 4 in.) The playhouse's dimensions could have been almost the same, if its room spanned an entire floor. This would have created an indoor playhouse of small dimensions when compared even to some of the smaller London indoor theatres (e.g. the first Blackfriars playhouse is thought to have measured c. forty-six and a half feet by twenty-five feet, while the Phoenix measured fifty-two feet by thirty-seven feet).⁵⁴ However, the theatre could have been even smaller (for example, it might have occupied only half the length of the house). While a playhouse of such dimensions might seem small, we know that plays were staged in spaces of similarly compact proportions (e.g. Trinity Hall in London, used by players on a number of occasions in the Elizabethan period, measured only thirty-two feet by fourteen feet; and in Cambridge, the town hall where Queen Anne's players were authorised to perform by the Mayor in 1605-6, measured twenty-two feet by seventeen feet and six inches).⁵⁵

⁵³ Smith, p. 139.

⁵⁴ Smith, pp. 135-6.

Keith Sturges, *Jacobean Private Theatre* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), p. 39.

⁵⁵ Richard Hosley, 'Three Renaissance Indoor Playhouses', *English Literary Renaissance*, 3 (1973), 166-182 (p. 176).
Nelson, I, p. 403.

The Stage

As in the open-air and indoor playhouses of London, the 'stage' at the Wine Street playhouse is likely to have been a wooden platform (perhaps three feet above the ground, depending on the height of the ceiling) and placed at one end of the room.⁵⁶ The size of the stage is unknown. It is unlikely to have been of large dimensions, but may have been fitted with a small tiring house at the rear. However, if there were no exits at the rear of the stage (e.g. into a tiring house), space may have been left at either side of the platform.⁵⁷ Whether the room which housed the playhouse was adapted as a theatre in any other ways is not noted. It is possible, however, that the room was also fitted with benches, as was the case at other early indoor playhouses in London such as the St Paul's theatre and the first Blackfriars playhouse.⁵⁸ It is less likely that galleries were added.

Costumes, Properties and Playbooks

There is no evidence that Woolfe owned any playbooks or kept a stock of costumes or props at the Wine Street playhouse, as did some London theatre proprietors, such as Philip Henslowe (e.g. Woolfe's will does not contain any references to playbooks or any obvious allusions to items of playing gear).

Performances at the Wine Street playhouse

Richard Cooke refers to players performing at the house in Wine Street in the early part of the seventeenth century (as cited above, p. 344). The payments received by St John the Baptist's almshouse and Queen Elizabeth's hospital from the playhouse after 1615 (in accordance with Woolfe's will) provide indirect confirmation that the playhouse was open and presumably hosting play performances after Woolfe's death. [All the annuities to be paid

Alan H. Nelson, ed., *REED: Cambridge*, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1989), II, p. 724.

⁵⁶ Smith suggests that the stage at the first Blackfriars playhouse was '36 inches high'. [Smith, p. 138.]

⁵⁷ The shape of the stage is another detail unrecorded in the surviving descriptions of the playhouse. Judging from the evidence of the London playhouses and information relating to other scaffolds used in provincial performances (e.g. at the universities and at Gloucester booth hall), it is most likely to have been rectangular. However, to increase audience capacity, Woolfe might have opted for a tapered or wedge-shaped stage of the kind found at the Rose playhouse in London and shown in the later *Messalina* and *Roxana* title-page illustrations of indoor stages. Richard Leacroft describes how the two title-page illustrations show stages 'wedge-shaped and rounded', and suggests that 'this could be an arrangement which had persisted from the earlier sixteenth century roofed theatres'. [*The Development of the English Playhouse* (London and New York: Methuen, 1973; repr. 1988), p. 28.]

⁵⁸ Harold Newcomb Hillebrand, *The Child Actors: A Chapter in Elizabethan Stage History* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), p. 90.

from the playhouse which are described in Woolfe's will were made dependent upon the property continuing to function as a playhouse.]

There is, however, no record of any specific performance (or play) staged at the theatre. Likewise, there is no record of the name of any company which performed at the playhouse. In the latter instance, other sources of information about theatrical activity in early modern Bristol are potentially more revealing. There is, for instance, a strong possibility that the Children of the Royal Chamber of Bristol performed at the playhouse, as I shall explain below.

The Children of the Royal Chamber of Bristol and the Wine Street playhouse

In 1614-15 Sir George Buc, Master of the Revels, wrote a letter to the Lord Chamberlain regarding the formation of a boy troupe under the Queen's patronage at Bristol:

Good mr Paquior, mr *Samuel Daniell* hath enformed me yat the King my Master is pleased at the mediation of the Queen in his behalf, that there shalbe a company of childern or youths prepared & licenced to play comedies and tragedies hence at Bristow & elswh<...> & to go vnder the name & title of the Youths of hir maiesties royall chambre of Bristow. & he hath desired my good will herin & hee hath shewed to me a draft in *parchemin* of the Kinges warrant in this behalf. Provided therfor yat it be made in the same form (for I return the sam draft to you here enclosed) I yeld my consent.⁵⁹

The patent was actually given to Samuel Daniel's brother, John Daniel and read as follows:

Iames by the grace of God &c To all Iustices of peace mayors Sheriffes Bayliffes Constables headboroughes and other our lovinge subiectes and Officers greetinge. knowe yee that wee at the motion of our most deerelie loved consort the Queene have licenced and authorised And by theise presentes do licence and authorise our welbeloved Subiectes Iohn Daniell and his Assignes to entertaine and bringe vp a company of children and youthes vnder the name and title of the Children of her maiesties royall Chamber of Bristoll to vse and exercise the arte and qualitie of playinge Comedies histories Enterludes morralles Pastoralles Stage playes and such

⁵⁹ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, pp. 202-3.

other like as they have alreadie studied or hereafter shall studie or vse aswell for the solace and delight of our most derely loved consort the Queene whensoever they shalbe called as for the recreacion of our loving Subiectes. And the said Enterludes or other to shewe and exercise publicuely to their best commoditie aswell in and about our said Citie of Bristoll in such vsuall houses as themselves shall provide, as in other convenient places within the liberties and freedoms of any other Cittie vniversitie Towne or Burrowe whatsoever within our Realmes and Dominions willing and commaunding you and every of you as you tender our pleasures not onelie to permitt and suffer them herein without any your lettes hinderances molestacions or disturbances duringe our said pleasure.⁶⁰

The establishment of a provincial royal acting company was an innovation in itself, but what is most interesting about the troupe, in the context of this chapter, is the fact that they were to be based in Bristol (although they were also permitted to tour). A resident troupe would have needed a regular venue for performances and the Wine Street playhouse would have lent itself to use as a theatrical base, being specially adapted and readily available for performances. [The fact that the troupe were licenced to perform in ‘vsuall’ houses at Bristol could indicate that Daniel already had the Wine Street playhouse in mind as a base for the troupe, and had mentioned this to the King and Master of the Revels. The playhouse was probably the most obvious example of a customary or ‘vsuall’ playing venue in the town at this date (although it is also possible that Barker’s playhouse on the outskirts of the town in Redcliffe Hill was operational at this date).] ⁶¹

⁶⁰ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 203.

⁶¹ However, even if Barker’s playhouse was open it is perhaps more likely that the royal troupe would want to use a central playing venue, like the Wine Street playhouse, rather than a theatre on the outskirts of the town and in a poorer area, like Redcliffe Hill. They could probably expect larger and potentially richer audiences at the former location.

There are several parallels between the phrasing of the patent and Woolfe’s references to the use of the playhouse in his will: ‘all Thannuities and yeerely Rentes before mencioned and lymitted to bee paid out of my said playe house shall continewe due and payeable soe longe only as the same house shall continewe a playe house at that such players as doe resorte to the said Cittie or inhabite within the same doe vsuallly playe there and may be permitted & suffered quietly to play there’ (own emphasis). [Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, pp. 196-7]. It is probably a coincidental use of common legalistic terminology. However, it could also indicate that a draft of the patent was in existence before Woolfe’s death and that he was familiar with it, or that Woolfe was aware that Daniel and his associates hoped to establish a boy acting company in Bristol, seeking Queen Anne’s patronage for the troupe during her visit to the town that summer. [Although this is not necessarily how the idea of establishing the troupe was generated. It is possible that the Queen suggested its formation herself after visiting Bristol. In this instance, the similarities between the patent and Woolfe’s will would definitely be coincidental as her visit did not begin until after Woolfe’s death.] However, if Woolfe had conferred with Daniel before his death and knew about the planned boy troupe and that Daniel wished to use the Wine Street playhouse, it could explain why he alluded in his will to the possible use of the theatre by a company living ‘within’ the town (and possibly the

That the provincial royal troupe did perform (or planned to play) in the Wine Street playhouse (and possibly the Barker playhouse) could find further confirmation in a royal letter issued in 1617-18, 'confirming John Daniel's Patent to Form a Company of Players'. In this letter Daniel's authority to lead the Queen's company in Bristol is reiterated, but the phrasing relating to the places in which the troupe were authorised to perform is adapted in an intriguing way:

Wee haue thought good to grant vnto the said Iohn Daniell these our Lettres of Assistance Thereby requiring you in his Maiesties name straightly chardging & commaunding you and euery of you [...] quietly to permitt and suffer Martin Slatier Iohn Edmonds & Nathaniell Clay (her Maiesties seruants with their Associatts the bearers hereof) to play as aforesaid (As her Maiesties seruants of her Royal Chamber of Bristoll) in all Playhowses Townehalls Schoolehowses and other places convenient for yat purpose in all Citties Vniuersities Townes and Burroughes within his Maiesties Realmes and Dominions.
(own emphasis)⁶²

There were a number of playhouses in London, but there is no clear evidence of a playhouse (or playhouses) operating in any other regional town in 1617-18 (as far as we know). As an essentially provincial company, the clause authorising the troupe to perform at 'all Playhowses' would have been most relevant when the troupe was playing in Bristol. (Notably, there are no records of them performing in London.) Indeed, it is possible that this clause was included primarily with the Wine Street playhouse in mind.⁶³

playhouse).

⁶² Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 209.

⁶³ It is perhaps no coincidence that records of the Bristol troupe performing elsewhere in the provinces are more numerous after 1621, when the playhouse appears to have ceased operating for a time. Although it is also possible that the playhouse stopped functioning partly because the Bristol troupe chose to spend more time touring.

In 1621 and 1622 the troupe was paid fifteen shillings by Coventry's corporation. At Nottingham in 1623-4 'the Kinges playeres of the chamber of Bristowe' received ten shillings, and in 1623 Coventry paid another fifteen shillings 'to the Kinges players for bringing xx Bristow youthes in Musick'. At Leicester in 1624 John Daniel received only five shillings and eight pence on behalf of the Children of Bristol. The last record of the troupe performing according to Gurr was in 1626-7 at Nottingham when they received seven shillings. [Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 391.] The licensing of the troupe to perform in all playhouses is unusual. It is not a clause found in most company licences. Standard playing licences often refer at the same point to companies being licensed to perform in 'convenient places' in provincial communities. If playhouses are named in licences, it is usually in the context of authorising the troupe's performance in one or two named London theatres.

In the light of this cumulative evidence, it seems likely that the royal Bristol troupe *did* perform at Woolfe's playhouse and may even have been based there for a time.⁶⁴ If this was the case, the Bristol troupe would provide a provincial parallel with the earlier commercial children's companies of the Elizabethan and Jacobean capital who used indoor playhouses as their base (e.g. the Children of St Paul's at the St Paul's theatre and the Children of the Chapel Royal, at the first Blackfriars playhouse). When Queen Anne chose to patronise a provincial boy company she probably expected it to resemble the royal children's companies of the metropolis.⁶⁵ Likewise, the idea of basing the troupe at an indoor playhouse might have been suggested to Daniel by the example of the boy troupes of London. John Daniel, who was nominated to lead the troupe, and Martin Slater, who became involved with the troupe, both had connections with the boy companies and indoor playhouses of London. Daniel's brother, Samuel had been made Master of the Children of the Queen's Revels, based at the second Blackfriars theatre, in 1604 (although he soon lost the position, following the company's performance of his controversial play, *Philotas*, in the same year). Meanwhile, Slater was 'manager and shareholder of the Children of the King's Revels at Whitefriars in 1608'.⁶⁶

None of the troupe's plays are known to survive.⁶⁷ If they did, we might be afforded an example of a play staged at the Wine Street playhouse. However, the list of play-types which the Bristol company were authorised to perform (in their patent) suggests that the dramatic fare offered at the playhouse by the royal troupe could have been varied, including comedies, histories, interludes, morals, and pastorals.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ The troupe may even have stayed for a time in the playhouse. Certainly, the playhouse appears to have been used temporarily as a residential playhouse by earlier players. In the Cooke lawsuit, Cooke described how the playhouse 'lodged sundrie persons of all sortes many tymes', including 'certaine Comedyantes' whom Woolfe 'suffered to act and playe within the said Roomes'. [Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 198.]

⁶⁵ Queen Anne showed 'enthusiasm for boy companies throughout her life as queen of England', as Gurr notes. [Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 114.]

⁶⁶ Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 35, p. 296.

If Queen Anne nominated Daniel, it may have been partly because of his brother's recommendations and his familiarity with the boy companies and indoor playhouses of London.

⁶⁷ We do not even know who wrote for the troupe, although it is possible that John Daniel commissioned works from his famous dramatist brother (especially as Samuel was experienced in writing plays for boy companies).

⁶⁸ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 203.

Financial Success and the Playhouse as local benefactor

In his will, Woolfe called for several charitable annuities (totalling £3 6 s. 8 p.) to be paid out of his playhouse. This suggests that the playhouse was at least reasonably profitable, as Woolfe, presumably, would not have made these bequests unless the playhouse usually made profits in excess of this amount. Woolfe's reasons for making these charitable bequests are not known. He may have had a number of motives. There was a long tradition of including charitable donations in one's will as a way of securing the Lord's good favour in the life to come, while the decision to make the bequests payable from the playhouse's profits may have been pragmatic. The playhouse might have been the only enterprise with which Woolfe was involved which generated sufficient funds for the payment of the annuities. Equally, it is possible that Woolfe was purposely channelling the profits of the playhouse into philanthropic projects as a way of lending the theatre respectability and of ameliorating any local antipathy to the playhouse.⁶⁹

The Closure of the Playhouse

Why the playhouse closed (c.1625) is not explained in any of the surviving documents. Miles Woolfe, Nicholas' heir was a minor when his father died, and may not have shared his father's interest in the enterprise. Hence, when old enough to take charge of the playhouse, he may have decided to convert the property into a dwelling house which he could sub-let. Equally, the playhouse might have ceased operating because the number of playing troupes wishing to use the theatre had declined.⁷⁰ There may also have been less local interest in players (and possibly even some antipathy towards drama) in the town. There was certainly less civic patronage of drama in the 1620s.⁷¹

⁶⁹ In similar fashion, a number of London theatres and acting companies appear to have used contributions to the local poor as a way of palliating opposition to their establishments and of combating criticism of theatres as a social evil. In 1594, for instance, when the Lord Chamberlain, Lord Hunsdon wrote to the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Richard Martin requesting that he permit his playing company to perform 'this winter time within the Citye', he noted that the actors would be 'contributories to the poore of the parishe where they plaie accordinge to their habilities'. [E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), IV (repr. 1945), p. 316.] Notably, the promise of financial assistance in the provision of aid for local poor people overtly promoted support for theatres in some London parishes. When the Earl of Nottingham's players set about establishing 'a newe Playehowse' in the parish of St. Giles-without-Cripplegate, for instance, the local people wrote to the Privy Council requesting that they allow the company to build the playhouse. The reasons which they gave for supporting the playhouse included the fact that, 'the Erectours of the said howse are contented to give a very liberall porcion of money weeklie towards the relief of our Poore, The nomber & necessity whereof is soe greate that the same will redounde to the contynuall comfort of the saied Poore'. The actors' assistance was particularly desirable because the parish itself was 'not able to releue' its poor. [Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, IV, p. 328.]

⁷⁰ This may have included the Children of Bristol abandoning the playhouse as a base, as indicated above.

⁷¹ In 1620-1 three companies were rewarded and in 1621-2 only one troupe. After this date, there are

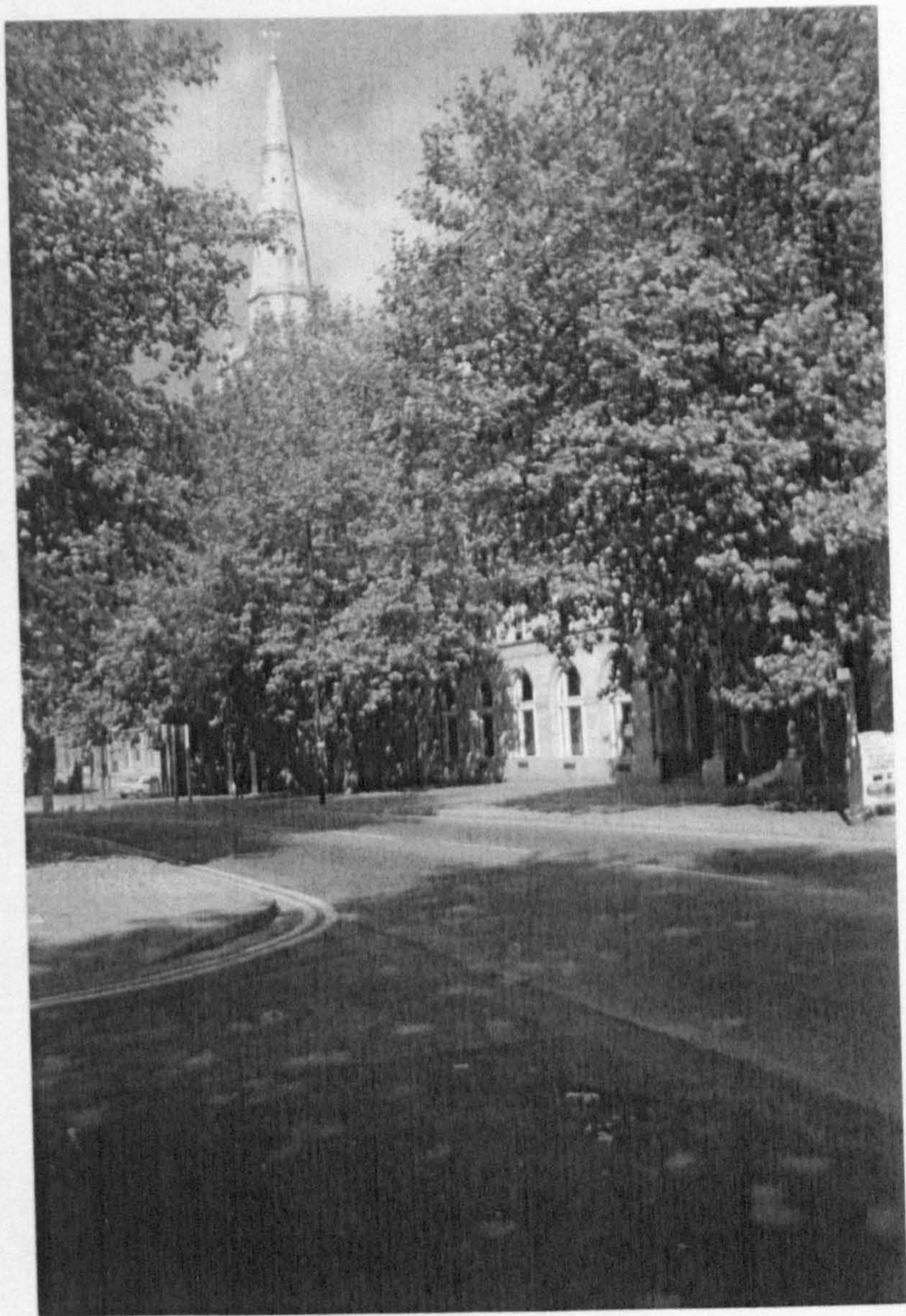


Plate 54: The Christ Church end of Wine Street today
[Author's own photograph]

The Later History of the Playhouse Site

As indicated above, it is likely that the playhouse was converted into a domestic habitation after its closure in the 1620s (as happened to the playhouse at Prescott, Lancashire). The building which housed the playhouse (wherever it stood on Wine Street) does not appear to survive today [see plate 54].

ii- Reconstructing the History of the Prescott playhouse, Lancashire

The Prescott playhouse was in early modern Prescott in Lancashire. This small town was most famous in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries for its market. Leland, for instance, described the town in 1535 as ‘a little market, having no notable water about hit a iiii mile from Mersey up toward Lyrpole’ [Liverpool].⁷² He also noted the proximity of the town to Knowsley park: ‘Knollesley a parke having a praty house of the Erles of Darby within a mile of Prestcod’.⁷³

The Evidence

The existence of the playhouse in early modern Prescott is recorded in a number of contemporary documents, including a memorandum written by Thomas Meade, the local vicar, to Edward Orme. (David George dates this document c.1603, making it one of the earliest allusions to the playhouse).⁷⁴ Meade refers to a rent from the playhouse: ‘The play

no civic payments to players until 1629-30, when the King’s players were paid ‘ij li.’ and another company was paid twenty shillings to go ‘out of the City’. Thereafter, there are only occasional payments to players and a number of them were for non-performance. [Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 216-7, p. 232.]

⁷² Leland, p. 42.

⁷³ Leland, p. 42.

⁷⁴ Thomas Meade was the local vicar and schoolmaster. He was educated at King’s College, Cambridge and ‘became vice-provost’. He paid first fruits 17 January 1583-4 suggesting that he entered into his seat at Prescott at this date. He was also apparently, ‘chaplain to Henry Stanley, Earl of Derby’. [Farrer and Brownbill, III, p. 344.]

F. A. Bailey cites an entry in 1603 from the rolls of the Court Leet (23 June) which also appears to allude to the playhouse. He translates it as follows: ‘The aforesaid jurors say and present that Richard Harrington, late of the hall of Prescotte in the county of Lancaster, gentleman, by and with the consent and assent of the Steward and of Thomas Meade, clerk, vicar of Prescotte (who has authority from the Provost and Fellows of King’s College in Cambridge to give licences for the erection of all buildings on the commons and waste of Prescotte, reserving such rents to the use of the lord as we deem appropriate) and also with the consent of the Four Men, has erected one messuage in Prescotte aforesaid, at the upper end of the street leading towards Eccleston, which messuage is now in the occupation of Elizabeth Harrington, widow, late wife of the said Richard Harrington, at the will of the lord, and rendering 2 s. 6 d. annually.’ [Bailey, pp. 73-4.]

house builded vppon the wast by Mr Richard Harrington now *Master Stuardes* rent by yeare v s'.⁷⁵

The playhouse is also mentioned in the Prescott Court Leet records of 16 June, 1609:

Item we present That Mr Thomas Malbon hath converted the play howse for a habitation And receyved a tenant into yt called whytsyde without Consent of the foure men [...]. And ffor that the ffoure men and the whole Iury [...] hould that whytsyde to be an vnfitt tenante to haue beene receyved or to Contynew in the towne: we do therefore order that Mr Malbon shall remove & avoyde him before St Iames day next vppon payne of vj s. viij d.⁷⁶

Malbon does not appear to have observed the Court's order, however, as in 1610 the Court Leet (8 June) noted that: 'et quod Magister Malbone non removuit quendam Whitsyde ex Lusorio secundum ordinem factum ad vltimam Curiam Ideo ipse in misericordia vj s. viij d.'. ('Mr Malbon has not removed one Whitsyde from the playhouse according to the order made at the last court; therefore he is to be fined 6 s. 8 d.).⁷⁷ They reiterated their order that Malbon remove Whiteside from the playhouse and added that 'neither the said Mr Malbone nor anie other Tenant of this Mannor shall entertayne or admitt the said Whitsyde or his ffamilie to Inhabite in the said Playhouse nor in anie other house or habitation within this Mannor without lycence and consent of the ffouremen'.⁷⁸ As the 1609 Court Leet record makes clear, the theatrical career of the playhouse was apparently at an end by this year, although it might have been used for plays as late as 1608.

The building which had previously been a playhouse was still being referred to by its old name c. 1614 in the Prescott grammar school accounts. Two references in the Christmas rents

⁷⁵ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 77.

The date of this document is not certain. Bailey suggested that it dated later than 1609 and George records that, 'a typed note on the copy' of the document (the original of which does not appear to survive) 'states that a pencilled "1609" was in the original "in a later but not a modern hand".' [George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 331.] George's reason for an earlier dating of the document relates to the reference to Master Steward. 'The property is likely to have been in the hands of the steward of the manor only between tenants, most commonly between the death of one tenant and the entry of the next one.' Harrington died in 1603 and there was a delay 'before his wife entered formally into the property [...], a period during which the steward would have been informally possessed.' [George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 331.] However, as the property also changed hands in 1615, the same reasoning could indicate that the document dates from 1615. [George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 332.]

⁷⁶ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 80.

The Four Men were 'the leading officers of Prescott township'. [George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 333.]

⁷⁷ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 80, p. 304.

⁷⁸ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 81.

mention the playhouse: 'ij s. vj d.' was received from 'Philip Hare for the play House', and 'John Houghton' paid the school a rent for 'a House built upon the west hard by the play House'.⁷⁹

The most detailed information about the size and location of the playhouse is provided, however, in the Prescott Court Leet records of 9 June, 1615:

Qui dicunt et presentant super Sacramentum suum quod ad hanc Curiam Iohannes Mercer de Eccleston iuxta Knowesley in Comitatu lancastrie ffreemason venit in propria persona sua Coram prefato Senescallo et petit licentiam ad intrandum in vnam parcellam terre in Prescott predicta iacentem in superiore fine alte platee ducentis uersus Eccleston prope ad Churchley feelde yate continentem in latitudine Apud orientalem finem inde novem virgatas et duas pedes et Apud occidentalem finem inde quinque virgatas et Continentem in longitudine novemdecim virgatas, de et super predicta parcella terre edificium erectum est antehac vsum pro quadam domu vocata a playehouse et pro quibus solutus est ad scholam de Prescott Annuatem redditus duorum solidorum et sex denariorum Et quod predictus Iohannes Mercer potest tenere et habere predictam parcellam terre et edificium sibi et heredibus suis Imposterum secundum Consuetudinem Manerij predicti Et in consideracione duodecim librarum legalis Monete Anglie per predictum Iohannem Mercer pre manibus solutarum Henrico Stanley Armigero licentia Concessa est prefato Iohanni Mercer per Senescallum predictum ad intrandum in predictam parcellam terre et edificium et eosdem tenere sibi et heredibus suis Imposterum secundum Consuetudinem Manerij de Prescott predicta Reddendum et soluendum proinde Annuatim Schole de Prescott predicta Redditum duorum solidorum et sex denariorum Ac etiam Reddendum Annuatim domino Manerij predicti Redditum (blank) in ffestibus Vsualibus per equales porciones.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 81.

⁸⁰ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 82.

Translated, the records reads: 'They (the jurors) say and present upon their oath that John Mercer of Eccleston near Knowsley in the county of Lancaster, freemason, came to this court in his own proper person before the aforesaid steward and sought permission to enter into one parcel of land in Prescott aforesaid, lying at the upper end of the High Street leading to Eccleston, near to Churchley Field gate, comprising in width nine yards and two feet on its east end and five yards on its west end and comprising in length nineteen yards- of and upon the aforesaid parcel of land a building has been put up, earlier used as a certain house called 'a playhouse', and for these (i.e. the building and the land) a rent of 2 s 6 d has been paid annually to the school of Prescott. And (the jurors say and present) that the aforesaid John Mercer is able to hold and have the aforesaid parcel of land and the building for

One of the last contemporary references to the Prescott property as a playhouse is indirect, occurring in a Court Leet document of 1617 (20 June). William Alcocke wished to surrender his lease on a Prescott property to 'Iohn ffletcher alias Garnett of Prescott'. The property was described as 'one Barne with it appurtenaunces lyinge neire vnto the play howse in Prescott together with a parcell of Land lyinge at the south side theireof' (own emphasis).⁸¹

While the primary documents surveyed above do not afford detailed information about the Prescott playhouse, the evidence which they contain can again be supplemented with information drawn from broader sources of evidence about early modern Prescott, its inhabitants and local theatrical activity.

The Establishment of the Playhouse

We know from Thomas Meade's memorandum that the founder of the Prescott playhouse was 'Mr Richard Harrington'.⁸² Although the date of the playhouse's erection is not explicitly recorded, the identification of Harrington as its builder does provide 'a terminal limit to the date of the building, for Richard Harrington was buried at Huyton 7 February 1602-3'.⁸³

As Bailey records, 'disappointingly little is known about' Harrington and his life. For instance, although his signature upon his will indicates that he was an educated gentleman, there is no evidence of his having attended either university.⁸⁴ However, we do know that Richard was married and that his brother, Percival was steward at Prescott from 1596-1605. In addition, there is evidence that:

himself and his heirs hereafter according to the custom of the aforesaid manor and (that) in consideration of £12 of lawful English money paid beforehand by the aforesaid John Mercer to Henry Stanley, esquire, permission has been granted to the aforementioned John Mercer by the aforesaid steward to enter into the aforesaid parcel of land and the building and to hold the same for himself and his heirs hereafter according to the custom of the manor of Prescott aforesaid, rendering and paying for it annually to the aforesaid school of Prescott a rent of 2 s 6 d and also rendering annually to the lord of the aforesaid manor a rent of (*blank*) on the usual festivals in equal portions'. [George, *REED: Lancashire*, pp. 304-5.] John Mercer took possession of the playhouse in 1615 and kept the site until his death in 1634. [George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 337.]

⁸¹ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 83.

⁸² Bailey, p. 77.

⁸³ Bailey, p. 71.

⁸⁴ No Richard Harrington is listed in the records of students matriculating at either Oxford or Cambridge in the appropriate period. [See John Foster, ed., *Alumni Oxoniensis*, III (London and Oxford: Parker & co., 1891), and John Venn and J. A. Venn, eds, *Alumni Cantabrigiensis*, III (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1922).]

He and Percival [...] were sons of John Harrington, esquire, lord of the manor of Huyton, and of his wife Alice daughter of Thomas Tarbock, lord of the manor of Tarbock in Huyton parish. [...] [While] a deposition of 1582 states that Percival was then about thirty years old. From this it may be deduced that Richard was under the age of fifty at his death. Apparently he had not long been married [when he died], for he left four infant children, all daughters, namely Jane, baptised at Huyton 18 May 1598, Anne, baptised at Huyton 16 April 1600, Alice, baptised probably at Prescott sometime in 1601, and Margaret, baptised at Prescott 3 January 1601-2. No record of his marriage has yet come to light, but his will shows that Elizabeth his wife belonged to one of the sundry branches of the knightly family of Molyneux of Sefton.⁸⁵

In 1595 he was described as 'Richard Harrington of Huyton Hey, gentleman' when 'he purchased a cottage and garden in Prescott, in the occupation of one John Hey, labourer, from James Ditchfield, clay potter'.⁸⁶ Huyton Hey was, 'the manor house of Huyton and presumably the residence of his brother Percival, so it would seem that at this date Richard was still a bachelor and living with his brother in the family seat.'⁸⁷ Harrington does not appear to have moved to Prescott until after his marriage (which was probably in 1597). It is most likely that he and his family took up residence in the town in 1601, when the lease on Prescott Hall was transferred to Harrington from Michael Doughty. This was his residence at the time of his death.⁸⁸

The Prescott cottage which Harrington obtained in 1595 was located 'some 150 yards distant' from the later site of the playhouse. However, Bailey suggests that its purchase might have been in some way 'connected with the playhouse project': 'the property' was possibly 'obtained in order to give Harrington a firmer local standing as a tenant of the manor'.⁸⁹ There is no explicit evidence that this was the case, but if the purchase of the cottage and the playhouse were in any way linked it could mean that the playhouse was established as early as 1596.

⁸⁵ Bailey, p. 71.

⁸⁶ Bailey, p. 71.

⁸⁷ Bailey, p. 71.

⁸⁸ The fact that Harrington's daughter, Alice was probably baptised at Prescott in 1601, rather than at Huyton like her older sisters, and the recorded baptism of Margaret at Prescott, 1601-2 suggest that the family were living in Prescott by 1601. [Bailey, p. 71.]

⁸⁹ Bailey, p. 71.

It is perhaps more likely, however, that Harrington built the playhouse after (or around the time) that he took up residence in the town (i.e. 1601). This would mean that the theatre was only briefly under his management, his death occurring in 1603. It might also mean that the playhouse only operated for a short time. [If his heirs did not take control of the theatre, it is possible that the theatrical career of the playhouse ended in 1603, although it was not actually converted for another use until 1609.] Why Richard Harrington should have decided to establish a playhouse in a small town like Prescott is more perplexing. There is no evidence that Harrington had any special interest in drama or any theatrical connections.⁹⁰

However, Prescott was apparently not without attractions for those working in the leisure industry. Although its resident population was small, the town had many visitors (e.g. some people were attracted by the market; others passed through the town on their way to and from between Liverpool and Warrington); and, in 1592, it could boast nineteen alehouses and at least one other entertainment venue, a cockpit. That the latter establishment had visitors from Prescott's surrounding area as well as from local people finds confirmation in the diary of Nicholas Assheton. He did not live in Prescott but in 1617-18 he reported how: On 2 June 'we all went to Prescott to a cockfight, and then rode to Lever near Bolton. Sir Richard Assheton, Sir John Talbot of Bashall and John Bradyll of Portfield near Whalley were among the company'.⁹¹ Harrington may also have hoped to capitalise upon the visiting trade which regularly passed through Prescott.

The proximity of Knowsley Park and the Stanley family, famed for their enthusiasm for, and patronage of drama may have provided a more particular motive for building a playhouse at

⁹⁰ The inventory of goods attached to his will includes no play texts which, as a gentleman, he could have afforded, and the list does include other leisure related possessions such as a 'hawcke' worth 'xl s'. [Bailey, p. 79.]

⁹¹ Cited in J. J. Bagley, *Lancashire Diaries: Three Centuries of Lancashire Lives* (London: Philimore, 1975), p. 12, p. 11.

One of the reasons for the proliferation and flourishing of the leisure industry in early modern Prescott is probably to be found in the town's special legal status. As Bailey reports, 'the townsmen enjoyed privileges which exempted them from the jurisdiction of the county magistrates'. [For example, the licensing of local alehouses was left up to the town steward, and the granting of permission to build on land in the town was the responsibility of the local vicar (as representative of King's College, Cambridge who owned most of the land), the steward, and the Four Men (who acted as the town's council).] [Bailey, p. 70.] The special nature of the town's government may have been one of Prescott's attractions for Harrington as a prospective playhouse-builder. Obtaining permission to build a playhouse from some provincial corporations would have been difficult. In Prescott, Harrington could expect to find the governing officials more well-disposed towards his scheme. Between 1596 and 1605 the under steward was Richard's own brother, Percival, and the Chief Steward was the sixth Earl of Derby, William Stanley, a well-known patron of drama. With the support of these figures obtaining permission to erect a playhouse from the Four Men and the local vicar, Thomas Meade (who was also the Earl's chaplain) was unlikely to prove difficult.

Prescot. Indeed, there is a possibility that the sixth Earl suggested or encouraged the building of the theatre.⁹² The sixth Earl's enthusiasm for theatre is well-attested. As well as patronising his own troupe of players (led by Robert Browne), he was involved in 'the revival of one of the great boy companies, the Children of Paul's'.⁹³ In 1599 it was reported that he had even offered the boy troupe financial assistance: 'my Lord Darby hath put up the players of the children in Pawles to his great paines and charge'.⁹⁴ In 1599-1600, Stanley's estranged wife attempted to lend her assistance to the Earl and his own players, writing to Robert Cecil on his behalf:

Being importuned by my Lord to intreat your favour that his man Browne, with his companie may not be bared from ther accustomed plaing, in maintenance wherof they have consumde the better part of ther substance, if so vaine a matter shall not seame troublesum to you, I could desier that your furdurance might be a meane to upold them, for that my Lord taking delite in them it will kepe him from moer prodigall courses'.⁹⁵

The sixth Earl is also known to have written plays intended for performance by professional companies. Indeed, in June 1599 George Fenner reported that he was 'busy penning comedies for the common players'.⁹⁶ William Stanley might have promoted or commissioned the building of the playhouse with the intention of using it as a venue for the troupes which he supported and as a showcase for his own works. [Unfortunately, none of his plays (or their titles) survive and we do not know whether any of them were performed.]

The location and nature of the playhouse

The 1615 Court Leet record provides the clearest description of the playhouse's location, describing the one-time playhouse property as 'lying at the upper end of the High Street leading to Eccleston'.⁹⁷ The 1615 Court Leet document also gives us our clearest indication

⁹² The question of the Earl of Derby's possible connection with the playhouse, given his 'known enthusiasm for the drama and authorship of plays' is, as Bailey notes, one of the 'most intriguing problems connected with the Prescot playhouse'. [Bailey, p. 77.]

⁹³ Peter Thomson, *Shakespeare's Professional Career* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), p. 46.

⁹⁴ Thomson, p. 46.

⁹⁵ Cited in Thomson, p. 48.

⁹⁶ Coward, p. 113.

⁹⁷ This is a translation from the original Latin. [George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 304.]

The 1603 Court Leet record cited by Bailey, in which reference is made to a 'messuage' recently built in Prescot by Richard Harrington, is likely to refer to the playhouse, as indicated above, and offers confirmation that the theatre was located at 'the upper end of the street leading towards Eccleston'. [Bailey, p. 74.]

of the playhouse's possible dimensions. The land upon which the house 'earlier used' as a playhouse was erected is described as comprising in width nine yards and two feet on its east end and five yards on its west end, and comprising in length nineteen yards. This converts into measurements of 29 feet, 15 feet and 57 feet [See plate 55].⁹⁸

The playhouse was probably slightly 'smaller than its site', but the difference is unlikely to have been large. For example, there may have been a small garden or strip of land adjoining the playhouse. Certainly, in 1721 the cottage which was described as 'formerly' being the theatre had 'a small garden'.⁹⁹ Likewise, Harrington might have chosen to build the playhouse on a rectangular site, rather than following the irregular shape of the plot (e.g. it might have been erected on a site 15 feet x 55 feet). However, if the building pulled down on the same site in 1902 was that earlier used as the playhouse, its nickname of 'Flatiron Cottage' could suggest that the theatre was shaped like its site.¹⁰⁰ Whatever its precise dimensions and shape, the playhouse was clearly smaller than most of the open-air amphitheatres of London (e.g. the Globe is thought to have had a diameter of 99 metres and the Rose playhouse was built on a plot of ground 94 feet square, while Bailey notes that the site had 'a ground area of approximately 140 square yards, which was almost exactly half the area of the Fortune Theatre').¹⁰¹ However, even if the Prescott playhouse was somewhat smaller than its site, its dimensions could have been comparable with those of several metropolitan indoor playhouses and other provincial spaces recorded as hosting plays. Although not as large as the second Blackfriars theatre, the playhouse might not have differed greatly in size from the first Blackfriars theatre (46 1/2 feet x 25 feet) or later hall playhouses such as the Phoenix (52 feet x 37 feet).¹⁰²

Whether the Prescott building was 'an open-air or enclosed building is not recorded'.¹⁰³ It was purpose-built and therefore could have been built as an amphitheatre, as occurred in London.

⁹⁸ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 304, p. xlv.

⁹⁹ Bailey, p. 77.

¹⁰⁰ According to Bailey, the building pulled down on the site in 1902 was nicknamed 'Flatiron Cottage', suggesting that it was narrower at one end like an iron. [Bailey, p. 77.] If this was the same building used as the playhouse, it could mean that the theatre was shaped like its site. The building which was erected upon the same site (now No. 72 Eccleston Street) is also known by the name of 'Flat Iron House' because of its irregular shape and 'resemblance in shape to a flat iron'. [Information kindly supplied by Tom Hughes, Knowsley Museum, in a private communication (23 rd March, 1999).] [There is a possibility that Bailey was mistaken in assigning the name of Flat Iron Cottage to the earlier building on the site. It may have been a name given only to the later building.]

¹⁰¹ Bailey, p. 76.

¹⁰² Sturgess, p. 39.

Smith, pp. 135-6.

¹⁰³ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. xlv.

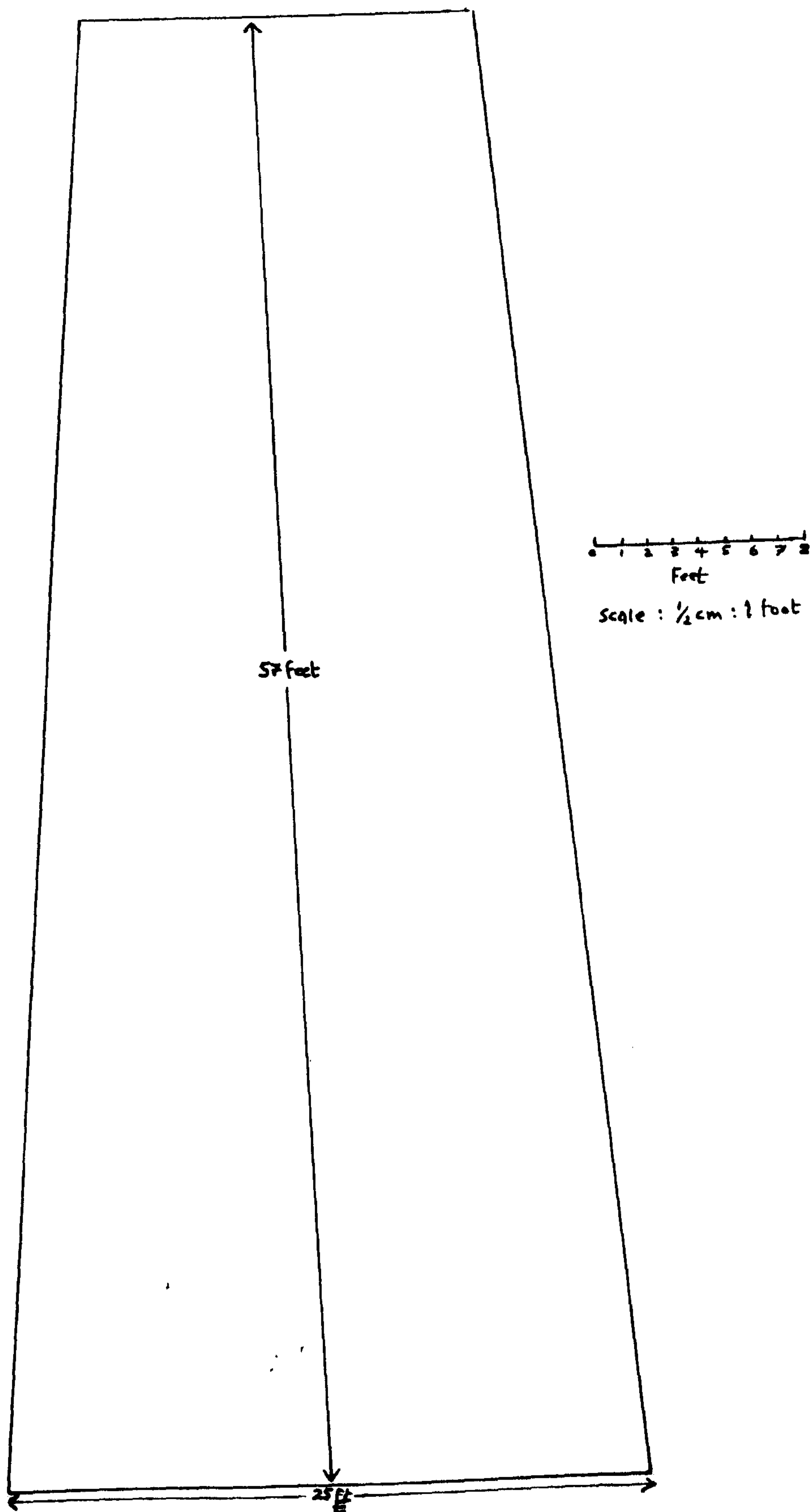


Plate 55: A Plan of the Playhouse site at Prescott, Lancashire
[Prepared by the author]

It is, however, more likely that the theatre was rectangular or shaped like the site, and covered. Only an amphitheatre of very small dimensions could have fitted within the plot. Had the playhouse been an open-air amphitheatre one might also expect the playhouse to be referred to more frequently as a theatre and for some remark to have been passed upon its shape. Later references to the converted playhouse describing it as a 'cottage', lend weight to the theory that the building was not circular, and suggest that it was a low building (perhaps only one storey high). No evidence about the interior of the playhouse survives.¹⁰⁴

Costumes, Properties and Playbooks

If a stock of costumes, props and playbooks was accumulated at the Prescott playhouse, no evidence of its existence survives. The inventory of goods which was attached to Harrington's will contains no obvious references to playing clothes, stage furniture or plays. It does, however, include an intriguing allusion to an 'instrument', valued at nine pounds.¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately, no further details are provided. If it was a musical instrument (e.g. an organ) it might have served some use in the playhouse.¹⁰⁶

Performances at the Playhouse

There are no records of any plays being performed at the Prescott theatre. This does not mean that the playhouse was not used, however, although this possibility cannot be ruled out. The Earl of Derby may have encouraged or invited his troupe (and other companies with whom he had theatrical connections) to visit and perform at Prescott and Knowsley Hall. They might even have mounted productions of the Earl's own plays, as noted above (p. 364). Other professional and amateur troupes touring Lancashire might have been attracted to the town as well, having heard that it possessed a playhouse. Once more the paucity of evidence makes it impossible to discover how regularly performances might have been staged or how much it cost to see plays at the playhouse.

¹⁰⁴ If the playhouse was rectangular and roofed, it is likely that the room used was also rectangular. It may have been fitted with a stage at one end (probably a wooden platform). If the building was irregularly shaped, like the site upon which it stood, a stage might have been placed at the narrower end of the auditorium, leaving the more commodious end of the room available for spectators.

¹⁰⁵ Bailey, p. 79.

¹⁰⁶ It is, however, possible that the Earl of Derby kept play books and playing gear at his Knowsley residence which were available for borrowing. To keep such items was not unknown. Alexander Houghton of Lea in Lancashire appears to have owned costumes, for example, leaving Sir Thomas Hesketh his 'playe clothes' in his will of 1581. [George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 350.]

The playhouse and its finances

Whether the playhouse proved profitable is unknown, but, regardless of its financial success, its proprietor was expected to pay an annual rent to the local school and to the Steward of the town. By 1615 the rent to be paid to the school was stated to be 2 s. 6 d., but in Meade's memorandum (c. 1603) he refers to the rent being five shillings.¹⁰⁷ In paying an annual fee to the school, the playhouse was, like the Wine Street playhouse (after Woolfe's death), effectively acting as a local social benefactor even though the rent was an obligation, in this instance, rather than a charitable donation.

The Closure of the Playhouse

By 1609 the playhouse had been converted 'into a howse for habitation' and was occupied by a man named Whitside.¹⁰⁸ The conversion of the Prescott theatre into a domestic house parallels the near or actual demise of a number of London playhouses.¹⁰⁹ Although 1608-9 marks the latest point at which the Prescott playhouse could have been operating, it is possible that the theatre ceased functioning as early as 1603 when Harrington died. However, it is likely that Percival Harrington assumed control of the property immediately after his brother's death, in his capacity as Steward of the manor, and may have taken over the management of the playhouse.¹¹⁰

At some point between 1603-1609, Elizabeth Harrington appears to have remarried, probably becoming the wife of Thomas Malbon (the man who was to turn the playhouse in to a dwelling house in 1609).¹¹¹ If the playhouse had continued to operate after 1603, under the management of Percival or Elizabeth Harrington, the remarriage of Richard's widow may have led to the theatre's closure. Alternatively, Malbon might have assumed the role of

¹⁰⁷ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 305.
Bailey, p. 77.

¹⁰⁸ George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 80.

¹⁰⁹ According to Herbert Berry, for instance: 'At one point, towards its end, Allen and Cuthbert Burbage spoke about using the Theatre as a playhouse for only five more years, and then converting "the same to tenement".' [Jon Greenfield and Peter McCurdy, 'The Construction of Two Experimental Bays in June 1992', *The Design of the Globe*, ed. by Andrew Gurr, Ronnie Mulryne, Margaret Shewring (Coventry: University of Warwick Printing Services, 1993), p. 70.]

¹¹⁰ He may have continued to manage the property on the behalf of Elizabeth, Richard's widow, when she was formally assigned the tenement. Equally, it is possible that Elizabeth Harrington presided over the playhouse.

¹¹¹ The possibility that Elizabeth Harrington married Thomas Malbon was first mooted by Bailey. He noted that between 1606-12 Prescott's Parish Register recorded the baptism of five children of Malbon's, describing him as 'of the hall of Prescott, gentleman.' In addition, the Parish records note the burial of his wife, Elizabeth at Prescott in 1614. [Bailey, p. 75.]

playhouse manager himself and continued to keep the theatre open.¹¹² Whether or not the playhouse was operating as late as 1608, its life was effectively ended in 1609.¹¹³

The later history of the playhouse property

The intriguing history of Richard Harrington's building has continued to be remembered by later Prescott inhabitants. When a survey of the manor was taken in 1721, for example, 'one of the properties in the possession of George Bradshaw, esquire, who had married Jane Roper, a great-great-great-grand-daughter of Richard Harrington, was described as "a cottage in Eccleston Street formerly called the Play House, and a small garden thereto belonging".'¹¹⁴

The building is no longer extant, although 'down to 1902 the site was occupied by a very old cottage called, doubtless from its shape, Flatiron cottage'. In that year 'the cottage was taken down'.¹¹⁵ It was replaced with a building used as a factory and warehouse for the Lancashire Watch Company. The earlier nickname for the building of the playhouse site was preserved, the Watch factory building being known locally as 'Flat Iron House'. The building which survives to the present resembles a flat iron in its shape, as appears to have been true of the building taken down in 1902.¹¹⁶ The Watch Company closed down in 1910 and, today, the building which stands at number 72 Eccleston Street, is used as 'a private storeroom'.¹¹⁷

¹¹² The fact that Malbon's conversion of the playhouse for domestic use coincides with the year of Percival's death, could lend weight to the theory that Harrington's brother had been acting as manager of the playhouse and that he had been allowed to continue in this role after Elizabeth's remarriage.

¹¹³ This may not have been the end of contemporary interest in the playhouse, however. Indeed, Bailey suggests that Henry Stanley's assumption of control of the playhouse in 1614 seems 'to point to an intention to restore the playhouse'. [Bailey, p. 77.] He also notes that the reopening (or rumoured reopening) of the playhouse could explain why there were players in the town in 1618. At the Court Leet of 5 June, 1618 James Ditchfield was presented 'for makinge a Tusle vpon one of the queenes servantes a Player & the said player with others of his fellowes' were also presented 'for the lyke vpon the said Iames dytcheffeyld'. [George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 83.] The pledge for them all was Henry Stanley.

However, when John Mercer took possession of the playhouse property in 1615 it was described as 'earlier used as a certain house called "a playhouse"' (own emphasis). [George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 304.] This indicates that the house had not been reconverted into a theatre in 1614, even if this had been desired by the Stanleys and encouraged by their kinsman, Henry Stanley, as steward. John Mercer could have revived the playhouse, but there is no evidence that he did reconvert the building for theatrical use, and the fact that the property was referred to simply as 'one messuage in the vpper end of the streete leading towards Eccleston' in 1634 suggests that it had not been functioning as a playhouse for some time. [Bailey, p. 76.]

¹¹⁴ Bailey, p. 77.

According to Bailey, 'a plan of the site made in 1807 [...] is preserved amongst other deeds in a Liverpool solicitor's strong room'. This plan has not been traced although apparently the site had already been somewhat altered by this date. [Bailey, p. 77.]

¹¹⁵ Bailey, p. 77.

¹¹⁶ Hughes, private communication, 23rd March, 1999.

¹¹⁷ Hughes, private communication, 23rd March, 1999.

iii-The York Playhouse, 1609

The playhouse established in York in 1609 appears to have been the shortest lived of the Elizabethan and Jacobean provincial playhouses. On 22 September, 1609 corporate permission to establish a playhouse in York was given; but by 11 December corporate licence for the theatre was withdrawn and the closure of the playhouse was ordered. The playhouse may not have hosted a single performance.

The two entries in York's corporate 'House Books' documenting the granting and later withdrawal of corporate permission for the playhouse provide the only contemporary references to (and information about) the playhouse. I transcribe them in full:

(22 September)

And nowe vpon A petition preferred by Richard Middleton and others wherin they requested that they might be *permitted* to erect A Theater or playhowse within this Citty wherin such as have bene borne and brought vpp therin should imploye ther laborious expenses for the maintenance therof *which* might be A meanes to restrayne the frequent *Comminge* thervnto of other Stage plaiers, and they would yeild x li. *per annum* vnto this Corporacion It is therfore thought good and agreed by this Court that ther said requestes shalbe graunted vnto them vpon suche Condictions as shalbe agreed vpon hereafter by this Court.

(11 December)

And wheras Richard Middleton and others did heretofore of late make suite vnto this court that they might be *permitted* to erect a Theater or playhowse within this Cittie, And this Court then takeinge consideracion vpon ther requestes did thinke good that before they should begyn to erect the same playhowse ther should be some Condictions considered vpon by this Court *which* they should on ther *parte* *performe*, And forasmuch as this Court doth vnderstand that they have erected A Theater or playhowse in this Cittie, and have not attended this Court to have receyved dyreccions vpon what Condictions they might have bene *permitted* And have drawne vnto ther companyes straingers that did inhabitt in the Countrie, and likewise some of manuell occupacions in this Cittie who do intend to give over ther occupacions and fall to [and] an idle Course of life, It is nowe thought good and agreed by this Court for that they have *proceded* in such sorte

as aforesaide that they shalbe discharged for kepeinge of anie playhowse in this Cittie, as they will answere at their owne perell.¹¹⁸

The suppression of the first York playhouse anticipates and provides a fascinating parallel with the forced closure of the Porter's Hall theatre in London.¹¹⁹ In 1615 'Philip Rosseter, musician and former manager of a boy company' had 'allied himself with Edward Alleyn and others to build a new playhouse at Porter's Hall' in London, 'designed to match the Blackfriars'.¹²⁰ The City Council, however, later objected to the project and complained to the Privy Council, as is recorded in the Privy Council minutes of September 26, 1615.¹²¹

The Privy Council consequently 'issued instructions to block' the venture. The playhouse was built, nonetheless, as is recorded in another Privy Council Minute in 1617: 'certaine persons that goe about to sett up a Play house in the Black Fryers neere unto his Majesties Wardrobe, and for that purpose have lately erected and made fitt a Building, which is almost if not fully finished'.¹²² They also noted that this was 'contrary to several prohibitions, and that the King that day had given instructions to pull the building down'.¹²³ In this instance, the Privy Council succeeded and the playhouse was, like the York playhouse, closed after a very brief career as a theatre.¹²⁴ The York playhouse is less fully documented than the Porter's Hall theatre. Nonetheless, the two civic documents cited above do contain some intriguing information about the theatre and its brief life.

¹¹⁸ REED: *York*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, 2 vols (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto; London: Manchester University, 1979), I, p. 530, p. 531.

¹¹⁹ The foiled opening of the York theatre also has its metropolitan precedents. When James Burbage first converted the Upper Frater of the ex-Blackfriars monastery into a playhouse in 1596 he was prevented from opening it following a petition objecting to its operation prepared by Blackfriars' residents.

¹²⁰ Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 121.

A patent for the erection of the playhouse had been obtained on June 3, 1615, authorising 'the patentees of the Queen's Revels to build a Play-house for the Queen's Revels at Porter's Hall in Blackfriars, and for the performance of plays by the Queen's Revels, Prince Charles's men, and the Lady Elizabeth's men therein'. [Cited in Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, IV, p. 342.]

¹²¹ 'Complaint was made to this Boarde by the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the Cittie of London That one Rosseter, and others havinge obtayned lycense vnder the great Seale of Englande for the buildinge of a Play-house have pulled downe a great Messuage in Puddle Wharfe, which was sometimes the house of the Ladie Sanders within the Precinct of the Blackfryers, are now erectinge a Newe Playhouse in that place, to the great prejudice and inconvenience of the Gouernment of that Cittie.'

[Cited in Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, IV, p. 343.]

¹²² Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 121.

¹²³ Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 121.

¹²⁴ At most, it probably hosted one performance before its closure. Its career was therefore almost as short as that of Middleton's playhouse in York.

The Establishment of the playhouse

According to the entries in the York 'House Books' the erection of the York playhouse in 1609 was proposed by a group of local people, including Richard Middleton (e.g. the documents explain that the petition to build the theatre was 'preferred by Richard Middleton and others').¹²⁵ The 'others' may have included local players. Certainly, there is evidence of town players and of local interest in performing. In 1596-7, for example, twenty shillings was given 'in reward to the Citties players' for performing at the Common Hall; and in December 1605 the House Book minutes record that 'diuerse Cittizens sonnes of this cittye have made humble sute [...] that they might be licensed to playe in this cittye dureing this tyme of Christenmas next.'¹²⁶

The erection of the York theatre was presumably a collective enterprise, as was often the case when playhouses were built or set-up in London (e.g. the Rose theatre was funded by Philip Henslowe and John Cholmley, while the reconstruction and refurbishment of the Theatre as the Globe playhouse was supported by the Burbages and several of the Lord Chamberlain's Men.)¹²⁷ As Middleton's is the only name recorded in the civic documents, it is likely that he was the leading member and spokesperson for the playhouse collective. No further information about Middleton and the 'others' involved in the theatre project is afforded in the civic documents. Wider research in early modern records has, however, yielded some information apparently relating to Middleton.

The name 'Richard Middleton' occurs a number of times in the town's late sixteenth and early seventeenth century records, and in other contemporary records. For example, Richard Middleton (or Myddeltoune) 'of Yorks, gentleman', is recorded as matriculating at University College, Oxford on 7 June, 1583, 'aged 19'.¹²⁸ [This Richard was born c. 1563-4 and would have been approximately forty-six years old in 1609, if he was the Middleton involved in the playhouse venture.] In 1584 another Richard Middleton, son of George Middleton, draper was 'baptised in the church of St Martin Coney Street' in York on July

¹²⁵ Johnston and Rogerson, I, p. 530.

¹²⁶ Cited in Eileen White, 'People and Places: The Social and Topographical Context of Drama in York, 1554-1609' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Leeds University, 1984), p. 437.

¹²⁷ The five Lord Chamberlain's Men were Shakespeare, Heminges, Kemp, Phillips, and Pope. [Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 293.]

¹²⁸ Foster, p. 1010.

At University College Middleton would have found many fellow Yorkshire men, the college being known for its 'marked connection' with Yorkshire. [Stephen Porter, 'University and Society', in *The History of the University of Oxford*, IV, ed. by Nicholas Tyacke (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 25-103 (p. 60).]

11th.¹²⁹ In 1587 Richard Middleton, 'gentleman of Spofforth, W. R. Yorks', was cited for six months recusancy in 1587 in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls, and in 1588 in York Jane Turner, widow, left two shillings 'to her godson Richard Middleton, the son of John Middleton merchant, deceased' in 1588.¹³⁰

In June 1605, a Richard Middleton was 'committed for casting capstones from the stone bridge adjoining Skeldergate' in York (with Henry May, the younger, and William Burlihead); and in November of the same year a Richard Middleton was arrested and committed for breaking windows in the town.¹³¹ On 6 February 1607-8 a Richard Middleton married Isabel Losh (b. 31 May 1579) at St Michael le Belfray Church, and Elinor, 'daughter of Richard Middleton, was baptised on 9 February, 1608-9 in the church of Holy Trinity Goodramgate', York.¹³² In the same year as Elinor's baptism, 'Richard Myddleton gent[leman] of York' published two collections of poems together, *Epigrams and Satyres*, and *Times Metamorphosis*.¹³³ There are also a number of post-1609 references to a Richard Middleton in York. In 1613 and 1615 'Richard Middleton, gentleman', living in All Saints Pavement parish was listed as a non-communicant (i.e. a suspected papist) and was visited by the churchwardens.¹³⁴

In her unpublished thesis of 1984, 'People and Places: The Social and Topographical Context of Drama in York, 1554-1609', Eileen White (apparently unaware of the 1587 allusion to a

¹²⁹ White, p. 442.

¹³⁰ *Recusants in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls, 1581-1592*, extracted by Don Hugh Bowler, ed. by Timothy J. McCann, Catholic Record Society, 71 (Southampton: Hobbs, 1986), p. 121. White, p. 442.

'The birth of this son is not recorded in the Parish Register of All Saints Pavement where his five other children were baptised between 1555 and 1564.' [White, p. 442.]

¹³¹ White, p. 444.

'On Friday 22 November 1605, William Hall (the son of George Hall of Strensall) was brought in and examined on a charge of breaking various glass windows the previous Sunday night. He confessed that the windows had been broken by Richard Middleton, William Atkinson, cordwainer, and John Parker, servant of Sir Matthew Redmayne.' [White, pp. 444-5.]

¹³² White, p. 449.

¹³³ The book was entered in the Stationers' Register on 4 May 1608, next to the name of Joseph Harrison: 'Entred for his copie Vnder th[e h]andes of Master DA. (Or rather GABRIEL) POWELL and the wardens A book called Epigrammes and Satyres made by Richard MYDDLETON gent[leman] of York'. [*A Transcription of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London, 1554-1640*, III, ed. by Edward Arber (London: Privately printed, 1876; repr. Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1967), p. 167.]

'Bound in a single book, the one copy known in Britain is in Edinburgh University Library (Special Collections, Drummond College, De. 5. 103). In rebinding, some of the numbers were lost when the pages were cut, but it was originally numbered as a single volume.' [White, p. 445.] The book begins 'with a tribute to his patron, William Bellasses.' [White, p. 445.]

¹³⁴ *Miscellanea: Recusant Records*, ed. by Clare Talbot, Catholic Record Society, 53 (Newport, Monmouth: R. H. Johns, 1960), p. 233.

recusant Richard Middleton, and of the record of a Richard Middleton attending University College, Oxford in 1583), suggests that all of the references cited above (excepting the bequest in Jane Turner's will) might allude to George Middleton's son (baptised in 1584), and that he was also the Richard Middleton involved in the failed theatre project of 1609.¹³⁵

It is quite possible that George Middleton's son was the Richard Middleton involved in the playhouse venture, but one can also make a case for identifying the older Richard Middleton who attended Oxford University as the theatrical entrepreneur. The latter is, for instance, more likely to have been the author of *Epigrams and Satyres*, and *Times Metamorphosis*, published shortly before the playhouse débâcle in 1608. In the Stationers' Register and in the university matriculation records the Richard Middleton referred to is described as a 'gentleman' of Yorkshire, and a similar variant spelling of Middleton is used ('Myddeltoune' in the university records, and 'Myddleton' in the Stationers' Register).¹³⁶

As this Richard Middleton was born c. 1563-4, he might be John Middleton's son, left two shillings by Jane Turner in 1588, and the Richard Middleton, 'gentleman of Spofforth' cited for recusancy in 1587. He could also be the Richard Middleton identified as a 'non-communicant' living in All Saints Pavement parish in 1613 and 1615.¹³⁷ There is some

¹³⁵ She notes that all the references she cites 'present a plausible picture of one man's life'. [White, p. 442.] At the same time, she observes that she does not think it likely that the one other Middleton she identifies, John Middleton's son, would have been the theatrical entrepreneur of 1609, inclining to the belief 'that someone born in 1584 is a more likely candidate for the aspiring drama presenter in 1609 than someone of the generation of John Middleton's children.' [White, p. 442.]

¹³⁶ George Middleton's son, Richard does not appear to be described anywhere as a gentleman, although, theoretically, he could have used this title. 'George Middleton could have claimed the title "gentleman" as a former chamberlain' and 'in a feoffee deed for St Martin Coney Street Church of 22 March 1607-8 he is described as a gentleman. [...] The claim to be a gentleman did not necessarily need to be substantiated by a large show of wealth. [...] There seems to be no reason why Richard, son of George Middleton, could not style himself as a gentleman.' [White p. 448.] However, it seems more likely that the author of the poems was the older Richard Middleton who matriculated at Oxford, and who is unequivocally called a gentleman of Yorkshire. The fact that the poems also include university allusions increases the likelihood that the older Richard Middleton was the author of the 1608 publication. The narrator in *Times Metamorphosis* expresses sympathy for 'Ridentius', a university poet 'who employed his "Cambridge wits" on drama and failed': 'Tut feare not man, be not discouraged. / Had but thy seuerall plaies been managed / With skilfull actors, they had beene thy praise, / Where now they'r mention'd vnto thy disgrace.' [White, p. 447.]

¹³⁷ If Middleton was a Catholic or Catholic-sympathiser from his youth, theoretically he would have been obliged to conform to the established church before he was allowed to matriculate at Oxford in 1583. In 1581 'a new statute of matriculation tightened the arrangements combining subscription to the statutes of the university and to the religious settlement'. [James McConica, 'The Rise of the Undergraduate College', in *The History of the University of Oxford, III: The Collegiate University*, ed. by James McConica (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), 1-68 (p. 51).] However, these orders were not necessarily rigidly enforced, and there were known to be recusants in the University at this time.

evidence that the Richard Middleton who published the 1608 poems was sympathetic to Catholicism, as White notes. In the verse titled 'In Theophilium' on 'the "seeming pietie" of some religious men', the narrator speaks of 'pure Religion' being fled, a perception of the contemporary church that recusants would share and relate to: 'And whither is she fled ? or in what place / hath pure Religion Coupt her selfe from men ? / That now she dare not manifest her face, / But like a shadow comes and goes agen ?'.¹³⁸

If this older Richard Middleton was John Middleton's son we might have further reason to identify him (rather than George Middleton's son) as the Richard Middleton living in All Saints Pavement parish in the early seventeenth century as well, as John Middleton's family had an existing connection with the parish. John Middleton had lived there with his family in the early Elizabethan period. Five of his children were baptised there 'between 1555 and 1564'.¹³⁹

If each of these selected pieces of evidence relates to the same older Richard Middleton, some explanation (and supporting evidence) for his involvement in the York theatre project (rather than George Middleton's son) might also be afforded. Both being a Catholic and an Oxford graduate could have contributed to the older Middleton having an interest in theatre. There was a long Catholic tradition of using drama as vehicle of religious and moral instruction, and plays were regularly staged in the colleges of Elizabethan and Jacobean Cambridge and Oxford, performances providing an opportunity for students to improve their oratorical and rhetorical skills. Middleton might have seen numerous college plays while an undergraduate, although no plays appear to have been staged in University College itself

¹³⁸ White, p. 446.

¹³⁹ White, p. 422.

The remaining pieces of evidence (the two 1605 references, the marriage record, and the christening of Elinor) are, I think, more likely to relate to George Middleton's son. For instance, the bridge from which Middleton was reported to have thrown capstones in 1605 was near Skeldergate, an area with which George Middleton's family had a connection. Since 1580 George had held 'a garth at Skeldergate Postern', and Henry May (the younger) who was also involved in the incident was someone with whom this Middleton family had an association. The widow of George Middleton's brother (Thomas Middleton) had married Henry May (senior). [White, p. 444, p. 422.] Given his involvement in this incident, it also seems likely that George Middleton's son was the Richard Middleton in trouble in December in 1605. (Certainly, breaking windows is something one would more usually expect from a nineteen year old Richard Middleton, rather than a man of forty-one; the age the older Richard Middleton would have been at this date.) For reasons of age it is also more likely that George Middleton's son was the Richard that married in 1607-8 and who had a daughter baptised in 1608-9. [George Middleton's son would have been approximately twenty-four at this date, a usual age to get married. By contrast, the Richard Middleton who went to Oxford would have been roughly forty-two. Most men would have married already by this age, although one cannot rule out the possibility of a second marriage.]

during this period.¹⁴⁰ He might even have acted informally.¹⁴¹ If he was the author of the 1608 poems, some confirmation that the older Richard Middleton was interested in theatre in the early seventeenth century would also be afforded. *Times Metamorphosis* incorporates several allusions to plays and acting, as White has pointed out. On page 24 of the 1608 edition, Middleton's narrator alludes to 'our Worthy poets' who 'portray these knights in colours; what for fit? / But to be represented on a Stage / By the shanke buskind actors'.¹⁴² There are also two references to Christmas drama: 'Jano is chang'd for a Christmas stage, / Whereas he plaid a Lover that in rage / Did stabe himselfe, unto a husband now, Pressing a palme, and making it to bow'; and a lawyer, Pandulpho is told to 'get thee hence / Pigmey-attourney, actor, Christmas plaier, / I scorne to seat thee in my verses chaire.'¹⁴³

Without more evidence we cannot be certain that it was Richard Middleton, the Oxford matriculant, who attempted to establish the York playhouse. It remains equally possible that the younger Richard, son of George Middleton, was the theatrical entrepreneur. The playhouse builder might even have been a third figure, hidden in the records of Richard Middletons in early Jacobean York. However, the possibility that a gentleman poet and closet Catholic was one of the first regional playhouse entrepreneurs is particularly intriguing and suggestive.

Reasons for establishing the playhouse

As the largest northern town in early modern England, York had obvious attractions as a venue for a playhouse. Its population of 10,000 or more provided a large body of prospective spectators. The town was also among the wealthier provincial communities and more capital was therefore potentially available for borrowing or investment in a new commercial enterprise such as a playhouse. At the same time, there was clearly a taste for theatre in the town, as is manifested in the town's continuing sponsorship of its religious plays in the Elizabethan period (when many other towns had abandoned their traditional cycles of biblical

¹⁴⁰ Students could sometimes attend performances in colleges other than their own.

[Frederick S. Boas, *University Drama in the Tudor Age* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1914), pp. 386-390.]

¹⁴¹ If the Richard Middleton involved in the York playhouse was the recusant Middleton recorded as living in Jacobean York, it raises intriguing questions about the possible religious affiliations of the 'others' in the playhouse collective and about the corporation's reasons for closing the playhouse. If the 'others' included recusants or Catholic sympathisers, it could provide a further explanation for the corporation's closure of the theatre. Having realised that the petitioners were Catholics or Catholic sympathisers they may have feared that the playhouse would become a recusant meeting place or that it would be used as a platform for the performance of pro-Catholic plays.

¹⁴² Cited in White, p. 447.

¹⁴³ Cited in White, p. 447.

plays), and by the regular visits paid the town by playing companies in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.¹⁴⁴ What specifically prompted Middleton and his colleagues to establish a playhouse in 1609 is more difficult to determine. Their motives are likely to have been at least partly entrepreneurial (i.e. they wished to cater for, and profit from, the popularity of drama in the town), and the proposed payment of ‘x li. *per annum* vnto’ the Corporation suggests that they expected the theatre to be financially profitable.¹⁴⁵

The collective’s formal explanation for erecting the theatre, as recorded by the corporation, was that they wished to provide a ‘Theater or playhowse within this Citty wherin such as have bene borne and brought vpp therin should imploy ther laborious expenses for the maintenance therof *which* might be A meanes to restrayne the frequent *Comminge* thervnto of other Stage plaiers’ (own emphasis).¹⁴⁶ Interpreting the precise meaning of this explanation is difficult because the language used is ambiguous. In particular, it is not clear whether the underlined phrase is meant to signify people brought up in York or people brought up in the theatre (i.e. local professional actors). In the latter case, the petitioners were apparently saying that the playhouse was to be a base and showcase for resident York players. (This could indicate that the petitioners included local players, as noted above, p. 371.) However, it is perhaps more likely that the phrase refers to natives of York. In this instance, the petitioners appear to have argued that the theatre was intended to cater for people born, raised and working in York.¹⁴⁷

Whichever way one interprets the petitioners’ reported explanation, the suggestion that a York playhouse would lead to fewer acting troupes visiting the town represents a curious justification for the erection of a theatre, appealing to corporate anti-theatrical feeling. In effect, the petitioners argue that the establishment of a playhouse in the town is a regulatory and restrictive measure, which will reduce rather than increase dramatic activity in the town.

¹⁴⁴ In 1601, for example, the town rewarded Lord Chandos’ players for performing. In 1602, payments were made to the Queen’s players and Lord Lincoln’s players. In 1603, three troupes were rewarded (the Lord Admiral’s, Lord Stafford’s, and Lord Evers’), and in 1605 Lord Dudley’s and Lord Berkeley’s players were paid for performing in the town. [Johnston and Rogerson, I, p. 499, p. 501, p. 509, p. 517.]

¹⁴⁵ Johnston and Rogerson, I, p. 530.

¹⁴⁶ Johnston and Rogerson, I, p. 530.

¹⁴⁷ Understood in this way, it is still not entirely clear whether the petitioners were arguing that the playhouse would provide local people with a place of recreation and somewhere to spend their money, or suggesting that the theatre would provide work for, and be sustained by, the labour of York people. However, the former reading would perhaps make more sense of the subsequent suggestion that the playhouse could prompt a reduction in the number of visiting acting companies in the town. If York’s residents were spending their wages on locally-provided entertainment at the playhouse, they would be less able or likely to pay to see play performances by visiting troupes, gradually discouraging such companies from visiting the town.

There might be obvious politic reasons for making such an argument in an era when corporations were increasingly keen to regulate communal recreational activities as potential occasions of disorder. At the same time, in giving this explanation, the petitioners do perhaps provide an insight into their actual motives for building a playhouse. In arguing that the theatre could lead to a reduction in the activity of visiting players in the town, the petitioners suggest that the playhouse was intended for use by local companies (or possibly even a resident local company) rather than visiting troupes. It is also possible that the members of the collective had more specific personal reasons for wishing to erect a playhouse in York.¹⁴⁸

The location and nature of the playhouse

When the corporation decided to withdraw their authorisation for the York playhouse, they noted that it had already been 'erected [...] in this Cittie'.¹⁴⁹ This description indicates that the playhouse stood within the walls of the town. Its more precise location is not recorded. From the dating of the two 'House Book' entries referring to the York playhouse, we know that the theatre was built sometime between September 22 and December 11, 1609. Three months is a short period of time in which to have erected a new playhouse (or any other building), suggesting either that work on the theatre had begun before Middleton and his colleagues made their petition to the Council or that the playhouse was not an entirely new building.¹⁵⁰ Instead it might have been a conversion of an existing building.¹⁵¹ In this instance, Middleton and his collaborators would have been paralleling the example of London theatrical entrepreneurs such as Richard Farrant and James Burbage, and their establishment of indoor playhouses in existing buildings.

Even if the playhouse was a new building, it does not appear to have been an open-air amphitheatre, as there is no evidence of such a building in John Speed's 1610 map of the town. In all likelihood the playhouse was a rectangular or square, roofed building. If the Richard Middleton involved was the Middleton who attended Oxford University, he might

¹⁴⁸ For example, Middleton may have been pursuing a personal interest in theatre, while some of the 'others' may have been players wishing to establish a local theatrical venue. Equally, if Middleton and his colleagues were recusants, they may have hoped to use the playhouse as a meeting place for local Catholics.

¹⁴⁹ Johnston and Rogerson, I, p. 531

¹⁵⁰ It took approximately five months, for instance, to re-erect the Theatre on the Bankside in London as the Globe playhouse in 1599.

¹⁵¹ Christopher Webb, archivist at The Borthwick Institute in York, draws much this conclusion: 'This short time-scale suggests that either the building Middleton erected was insubstantial, or that he used an existing structure. [...] Or, most likely, I think, that the word "erect" does not mean "build", but "establish". So perhaps there was no special building like the Globe, but a temporary or adapted structure, with little trace of it in the archaeological record'. [C. C. Webb, private communication, 16th February, 1999.]

have modelled the interior of the playhouse upon the temporary indoor theatres set-up in some college halls for play performances (e.g. using a demountable wooden stage and perhaps providing scaffolds for spectators as well as benches upon the theatre floor). Once more, a more detailed reconstruction is not possible.

Performances at the theatre

Given the brevity of the time which elapsed between the petition to erect the theatre and its suppression, it is unlikely that the playhouse had been in operation for very long. Indeed, it may not have been opened to players at all. If any performances were staged before the Council intervened they were probably mounted by local players (possibly including some of those involved in its erection). Although it is also possible that the 'straingers' alluded to were professional or amateur actors drawn from neighbouring parts of Yorkshire, and that they also performed or participated in any productions staged at the theatre before its closure.¹⁵² The Council's complaints in December imply that other York residents were contemplating a theatrical career at the playhouse as well (possibly as actors or stage hands): '[they] have drawne vnto ther companyes [...] likewise some of manuell occupacions in this Cittie who do intend to give over ther occupacions and fall to [...] an idle Course of life.'¹⁵³ However, the prompt intervention of the Council probably means that these amateur theatre enthusiasts did not have an opportunity to work or perform at the theatre.

The Closure of the theatre

When the Council withdrew their authorisation for the York playhouse it was on the grounds that Middleton and his associates had not waited to receive their directions 'vpon what Condictions they might have bene permitted'.¹⁵⁴ However, the comments following this observation suggest that this was not the Council's main concern. As noted above, they complain about the playhouse-builders having 'drawne vnto ther companyes straingers' and 'some of manuell occupacions in this Cittie' (encouraging the latter to contemplate abandoning their usual professions for 'an idle Course of life' at the playhouse).¹⁵⁵ These complaints indicate that the Council were primarily concerned with preserving order and local social hierarchies. The presence of strangers in the town and the prospect of people abandoning their professions, and their responsibilities to their fellow workers in their respective occupations, probably both represented potential threats to the local status quo in

¹⁵² The Corporation complained that Middleton and his collaborators had 'drawne vnto ther companyes straingers that did inhabit in the Countrie'. [Johnston and Rogerson, I, p. 531.]

¹⁵³ Johnston and Rogerson, I, p. 531.

¹⁵⁴ Johnston and Rogerson, I, p. 531.

¹⁵⁵ Johnston and Rogerson, I, p. 531.

the eyes of the corporation. The Council may also have become less convinced that the playhouse's existence would lead to fewer touring players visiting the town (e.g. if the founders of the playhouse were already inviting strangers to join their enterprise, there was no reason to believe that they would not also welcome and perhaps encourage other troupes to visit the town and the theatre).

There are no further references to the playhouse after 1609 indicating that Richard Middleton and his associates obeyed the civic order of December 11th. The playhouse was probably converted into an ordinary habitation, like those in Bristol and Prescott.¹⁵⁶ As its location is unknown, it has not been possible to determine whether the building survives to the present.

III- Other Elizabethan and Jacobean Provincial Playhouses: Some Candidates

i- The Great Yarmouth 'Game place house'

References to the Great Yarmouth 'game place' date back as early as 1492-3 when there was a payment, recorded in the Borough Court Rolls, to 'Henrico Ilberd *pro les Tentys iuxta le gameplace*'.¹⁵⁷ The game place house is not mentioned until 1538-9 when five shillings was paid '*pro firma de le Game Place and domus ibidem*'. As Galloway observes,

in the same year, the Great Yarmouth Assembly Minutes record that, on 15 March, 1538-9, an indenture was made between the bailiffs of the town and Robert Coppyng for the rent of a garden, game place and game place house.¹⁵⁸

The relevant document reads,

[the] seid Robert and his assigns shall *permitt* and *suffre* all suche players as ther *audiens* to haue the plesure and ese of the seid hous and Gameplace at all suche tyme and tymes as eny interludes or playes there shal be ministered or played.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Had the theatre remained open it might have been used and sustained by the provincial royal company later associated with York, the King's Players of York. This troupe were active in the Caroline era. [Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 375.]

¹⁵⁷ Galloway, 'Records of Early English Drama', p. 94.

There are payments to other people in the rolls for 1531-32, 1533-34 and 1538-39, but these do not mention the house.

¹⁵⁸ Galloway, 'Records of Early English Drama', p. 94.

¹⁵⁹ Galloway, 'Records of Early English Drama', p. 94.

That the players and their audiences were to be allowed 'the plesure and ese' of both the game place and house is stated unambiguously, but whether the interludes were to be performed 'in the game place, the house, or in both' is not made clear.¹⁶⁰ It is possible that plays were performed in the house and that it was, in effect an indoor playhouse. However, David Galloway is probably correct when he argues that it is more 'likely [...] that plays were performed in the game place' and 'that the house was merely on, or adjacent, to it, and that, in it, the players and audience could take their "ese"- eat, drink and, perhaps, lodging'.¹⁶¹

Open-air game places were traditional sites of recreation (including play performances), and there are later examples of eating and drinking houses being established in affiliation with a playing place. When John Cholmley and Philip Henslowe agreed to build the Rose theatre in 1587, for instance, they decided that Henslowe would be responsible for the 'playe howse now in framinge and shortly to be erected and sett vppe' and Cholmley was to take charge of 'all that small tenemente or dwelling howsse scittuate and standing at the southe ende or syde of the said parcell of grownde or garden plotte to keepe victualinge in' or put to any other 'vsses whatsoever'.¹⁶²

Even if the Great Yarmouth game place house was used for plays in the first half of the sixteenth century there is no evidence that it was being used as a playhouse in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period. There are references to the game place and house in the records of the Elizabethan corporation but no indication is given that either site was being used for plays. In 1563-4, for example, reference was made to a payment of five shillings, 'Et super Reginaldum Turpyn pro firma de la Game place house, v s.', and to a receipt 'in redy money of Turpyn wherof lowyd hym by the assent of the howse v s. ffor the Rent of the game place howse'. There is another reference to the house in 1594-5. Again there is no suggestion that the house was being used for performances: 'Of widowe kethe for farne of the game place house by yere xvj s.'. ¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Galloway, 'Records of Early English Drama', p. 95.

¹⁶¹ Galloway, 'Records of Early English Drama', p. 95.

¹⁶² The fact that Henslowe also agreed not to 'permitte or suffer any personne or personnes other then the saide John Cholmley ... to vtter sell or putt to sale in or aboute the saide parcell of ground...any breade or drinke other then such as shalbe solde to and for the behoofe of the saide John Cholmley', indicates that Cholmley was planning to use the house as a victualling house, catering for the audiences attracted to the playhouse. [Cited in *Shakespeare's Globe Rebuilt*, ed. by J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1997), p. 178, p. 179.]

¹⁶³ Wasson and Galloway, p. 14.

At the same time, the Corporate order recorded in the Assembly Book on 11th November, 1596-7 suggests that it had become usual for players to perform in the guildhall rather than at the game place (or house) in the late sixteenth century. The order stated that, 'Game players having been heretofore licensed to play in the Guildhall, [it is] Ordered that the Bailiffs shall not suffer the players to play there for the future'.¹⁶⁴ Whether this order was obeyed is unrecorded. The game place and house might have been used once more, but the paucity of evidence makes it impossible to confirm or disprove this possibility.

The precise location of the game place and house is not known. If they survive to the present they have not been identified. It is, however, possible that further evidence relating to the site and house and their use will emerge. Until such a time, the playhouse at Prescott remains the earliest Elizabethan provincial playhouse.

ii- The Barker playhouse in Bristol

The will of Sarah Barker (31 May, 1637) alludes to a second Bristol playhouse:

I give devise and bequeath vnto my sonne Phillip and to his heires forever,
All those my three Messuages or *tenementes* and garden with their *appurtenances*
lyeing and being in Redcliffehill within the Countie of the said Citie of Bristoll
which I latelie bought and purchased of and from my sonne Iames Barker, Item I
give devise and bequeath vnto my said sonne Phillip Barker and to his heires
forever, All those my twoe messuages or *tenementes* and gardens with
th'*appurtenances* scituate & being vpon the west side of Redcliffe hill aforesaid
which I likewise boughte and purchased of and from my said sonne Iames Barker,
Item I give and bequeath vnto my sonne William Barker all that howse and being
which my late husband built for a playhouse, for all my estate terme & interest
therein except the Chamber over the well att th'end of the said playhowse, which
Chamber I give & bequeath vnto my daughter Ellioner Barker for all my terme
and estate therein.¹⁶⁵

As Pilkinton notes, 'the playhouse in Redcliffe Hill is known only through its inclusion' in this will.¹⁶⁶ Barker's will does not state whether the playhouse was used for plays or record

¹⁶⁴ Wasson and Galloway, p. 15.

¹⁶⁵ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 242.

¹⁶⁶ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. xxxvii.

the date of its erection, but it is likely that it was built (and possibly operated) by her husband in the Jacobean period. Barker's husband is not named in the will or in the parish record of her burial at St Mary Redcliffe's church but she was evidently a widow by 1628 as an audit in that year alludes to a rent of three pounds and fourpence received from 'the widdowe Barker for vj Tenementes' in Redcliffe Hill.¹⁶⁷ Further research in the parish records of St Mary Redcliffe has identified Richard Barker, 'a prominent merchant and member of the Spanish company', as Sarah Barker's 'likely husband.'¹⁶⁸

In her will, Barker requests that she be buried 'in the parish church of Redcliffe as neere my husband as may be' (i.e. St Mary Redcliffe's church), revealing the location of her dead husband's burial; and the Parish records for the church allude in 1614 to the burial on September 30th of Richard Barker 'merchant'.¹⁶⁹ I have not been able to trace a record of the couple's marriage, but confirmation that Richard Barker of Redcliffe Hill was the husband of Sarah Barker (and therefore the builder of the playhouse) is afforded by St Mary Redcliffe's baptismal records. In her will Sarah Barker names a number of children: Phillip Barker, James Barker, William Barker, Elinor Barker, Richard Barker, Florence, and Sara.¹⁷⁰ Between 1594 and 1612 a number of children recorded as being the offspring of Richard Barker were christened at St Mary Redcliffe's church: 'Johanna' (July 15th, 1594), Richard (September 5th, 1595), John (November 13th, 1596), Peter (February 4th, 1604), 'markes' (April 27th, 1606), Paul (September 1st, 1607), William (April 22nd, 1609), Elinor (May 8th, 1610), and Phillip (April 24th, 1612).¹⁷¹

If this list is compared with the children named by Sarah Barker there are obvious correspondences. Phillip, William, Elinor and Richard are named in Sarah's will as her children, and are also named in the christening records as Richard Barker's children. However, there are also some differences between the two lists. Three children (two daughters - Florence and Sara- and one son- James) named in Sarah Barker's will are not included in the list of baptisms, and five children listed in the christening records are not

¹⁶⁷ 'Sara Barker widdo' was buried on August 7th, 1637, according to the St Mary Redcliffe records of burials. [Bristol Record Office, FCP/ St. MR / R/ 1 (a) 2.]

City Chamberlain's Accounts in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, ed. by D. M. Livock, Bristol Record Society, XXIV (Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 1966), p. 158.

¹⁶⁸ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. lix.

¹⁶⁹ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 242.

Bristol Record Office, FCP/ St. MR / R / 1 (a) 2.

There is no other record of a Barker being buried at the church during this period.

¹⁷⁰ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, pp. 242-3.

¹⁷¹ Bristol Record Office, FCP/ St. MR / R/ 1 (a) 1.

Bristol Record Office, FCP/ St. MR / R/ 1 (b) 1.

referred to in Barker's will (Johanna, Peter, Paul, Marcus, John). In the former instance, it is possible that the girls were Sarah Barker's children by another marriage, as she does not refer to them as Barkers (whereas the 'Barker' surname is appended to the names of the other children mentioned in the will), while James Barker might have been an older son, born and christened in another parish. [In her will, Barker notes that she recently 'bought and purchased of and from my sonne Iames' the 'three Messuages or tenementes and garden' in Redcliffe Hill which she leaves to Phillip.¹⁷² The fact that James obviously owned several properties in Redcliffe Hill suggests that he might have been the oldest son and therefore left some of his father's Redcliffe Hill property upon his death in 1614.] In the second case, it is possible that the children christened but not listed in the will (Johanna, John, Peter, Marcus, Paul) had died before 1637 (although record of their burial in the parish has not been found, thus far). Infant mortality was high and the average life expectancy in the period was low even for those who survived infancy. It would not have been usual to have lost or to outlive a number of one's children, especially as Sarah Barker appears to have lived to an old age.¹⁷³

Whatever the reasons for the discrepancies, the correspondences between the children named in Sarah Barker's will and the Redcliffe Hill baptismal records provide, I think, sufficiently strong evidence to accept the identification of Richard Barker as Sarah Barker's husband. In this instance, the playhouse must have been built (and may have operated) prior to 1614 and was therefore 'probably contemporary with Woolfe's playhouse in the centre of the city'.¹⁷⁴ Woolfe's playhouse and its success may have inspired Barker to build his suburban theatre. He might even have established the theatre as a rival playing venue, seeking to challenge the Wine Street playhouse's probable monopoly of Bristol's theatrical market. Building and investing in a playhouse may have appealed to the merchant's entrepreneurial spirit. Certainly, Richard Barker was not unaccustomed to investing in risky but potentially profitable ventures. (For example, in the late 1580s he appears to have been part owner of an overseas trading ship, called the Hopewell. Although trading overseas could be lucrative, there was always a danger of one's ship being wrecked or pillaged. Similarly, in 1605 'Richarde Barker' is listed among the Bristol merchants who were members of the new Spanish company which received letters patent [31st May, 1605] from James I. The letters patent 'made a new grant of incorporation to the English Merchants trading to Spain and

¹⁷² Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 242.

¹⁷³ Assuming that Johanna Barker, christened in 1594 was Sarah's child, and Sarah was seventeen when she was born (thus allowing for the possibility that she may have already had a son, James) Sarah could have been as much as seventy years old when she died in 1637.

¹⁷⁴ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. xl.

Portugal'.¹⁷⁵ Barker may even have built the playhouse using profits from his work as a Merchant trader. Whether Barker was prompted to build the playhouse by other motives (such as a personal interest in theatre) is impossible to determine, as little more is known about Bristol's second theatrical entrepreneur.

The location of the playhouse

In her will Sarah Barker does not note the location of the playhouse explicitly. However, in 1627-8 she paid rents on six tenements in Redcliffe hill, and in her will she gives five houses on Redcliffe Hill to Phillip Barker, her son. She bequeaths a sixth property (the playhouse) to another son, William. By implication, the playhouse was housed in the sixth Redcliffe Hill property which she leased. Redcliffe Hill was an area on the outskirts of the town, south of the Avon. John Speed's map of the Jacobean town reveals that few houses had been built in this part of Bristol, and plenty of open ground would have been available for the erection of a new property such as the playhouse [see plate 56].

The nature of the playhouse

Barker describes the Redcliffe theatre as having been 'built for a playhouse'.¹⁷⁶ This suggests that the property was newly erected and purpose-built as a theatre. As such it would have been in the same tradition as the early open-air playhouses in the suburbs of sixteenth and early seventeenth century London.¹⁷⁷ However, the Redcliffe playhouse does not appear to have been an open-air amphitheatre. Sarah Barker alludes to a chamber 'over the well' being 'att th'end of the said playhowse'.¹⁷⁸ A circular building would not have an 'end', strictly speaking. It is more likely that the playhouse was another indoor theatre in a roughly rectangular building. Like the Wine Street playhouse, it appears to have contained a number of chambers as well as a theatre (including the chamber over the well which Sarah Barker reserves for the use of her daughter, Elinor). If the playhouse resembled other early modern

¹⁷⁵ *Documents Illustrating the Overseas Trade of Bristol in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by Jean Vanes, Bristol Record Society, XXXI (Kendal: Titus Wilson, 1979), p. 55.

Records Relating to the Society of Merchant Venturers of the City of Bristol in the Seventeenth Century, ed. by Patrick McGrath, Bristol Record Society, XVII (Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 1952), p. 3.

¹⁷⁶ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 242.

¹⁷⁷ Land may also have been more cheaply obtained. The ward of Temple and Redcliffe appears to have been one of the poorer wards in the late sixteenth century. Rents were probably lower therefore than in the central and richer northern wards of Bristol. According to Lobel and Carus-Wilson, 'the four northern wards were nearly seven times wealthier than the southern ward of Temple and Redcliffe' in 1574. [M. D. Lobel and E. M. Carus-Wilson, eds, *Atlas of Historic Towns: Bristol* (London: Scolar Press, 1975), p. 17.]

¹⁷⁸ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. 242.

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in number, those which existed are a further testimony to the popularity of theatre throughout Renaissance England, and demonstrate that theatrical innovation and dramatic entrepreneurs were not confined to the metropolis or to large towns.

Mutually illuminating parallels which can enrich our understanding of theatrical development in Renaissance England are to be found between the provincial playhouses described above and the metropolitan theatres of early modern England (as I have indicated at various points in this chapter). Most of the known Elizabethan and Jacobean regional theatres appear to have been indoor venues, for instance, anticipating the fact that indoor theatres were to supersede open-air amphitheatres in number and importance in Caroline London. Similarly, that each of the provincial playhouses appears to have been built by a person (or people) with no obvious theatrical connections or interests provides further evidence that the rise of the playhouse in England was largely instigated by business people, motivated by hopes of economic gain, rather than by players. Finally, the closure and later loss of each of the early provincial Elizabethan and Jacobean playhouses (and the buildings used) foreshadows the demise and physical disappearance of the more famous metropolitan playhouses of Elizabethan and Jacobean London.

After word

As is evident from the survey of provincial playing spaces and performances offered in this thesis, the dramatic culture of regional communities in early modern England was rich and varied. Performances of generically diverse plays are recorded (including religious dramas, folk plays, and secular works derived from the world of London theatre); and their players included licensed and unlicensed acting companies, professionals and amateurs. The few surviving accounts of performances reveal that regional theatrical productions could be as sophisticated and ingenious as performances staged in the playhouses of the Elizabethan and Jacobean metropolis.

The spaces used as playing venues in the early modern English provinces were, likewise, diverse in kind and size. Performances were staged in and outside various kinds of buildings (including town halls, churches and drinking houses), and in large and small spaces (ranging from the New Hall measuring approximately 125 feet by 70 feet at Norwich, to the upper chamber of Cambridge Guild Hall measuring only 17 1/2 feet by 25 feet).¹ The variety of spaces identified as provincial playing venues is a testimony to the adaptability of regional theatre and its performers, and to the fluidity of contemporary perceptions of what could constitute a playing place.

As in London, drama enjoyed great popularity in many parts of provincial England, and became subject to increasing regulation in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. (Corporations passed orders restricting and sometimes prohibiting play performances in certain buildings or at certain times). In some towns the curbing or closer supervision of dramatic activity was evidently prompted by the same anti-theatrical feeling which partly motivated the City Fathers of London to restrict dramatic activity within the walls of the capital. In other towns, the evidence indicates that corporations were prompted to regulate drama more closely by pragmatic social and political concerns (such as a wish to extend corporate control over community life, or a desire to avoid the disorders which sometimes accompanied large social gatherings and to control local expenditure upon recreation during the economic depression of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries). Despite the introduction of stricter controls, dramatic activity was only suppressed in some communities. In other early modern towns, the introduction of regulations appears to have impinged relatively little upon theatrical activity, play performances continuing to be staged throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean period.

¹ *REED: Norwich*, ed. by David Galloway (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1984), p. lxxxiv.

The widespread and diverse dramatic activity recorded in regional England in the Elizabethan and Jacobean era not only deserves attention, but rewards investigation, as the preceding chapters demonstrate. Indeed, as I have consistently argued, our understanding and appreciation of English Renaissance theatre, and of the place of individual authors and works (such as Shakespeare and his plays), is limited if we do not consider theatrical activity and dramatic culture beyond early modern London and its liberties. Research upon regional theatre affords evidence of Elizabethan and Jacobean performances which is intriguing in its own right, and yields fascinating insights into early modern English culture and theatre's place within it.

This thesis is the first extended study of English Renaissance provincial theatre. More research remains to be done, and further studies synthesising and analysing new evidence will be needed, as investigation in early modern archives continues (led by the REED project and its editors). I hope that this dissertation is only a beginning, therefore, and that it will encourage and provide a resource for other scholars pursuing research in this long-neglected field of Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre.

Appendix i

A list of Town Halls Recorded as Playing Places, 1559-1625

The following list is based upon explicit references to play performances in civic halls. Town halls identified as playing places indirectly (e.g. through orders regulating their future use for dramatic performances and alluding to their use for performances in the past) are included as well as references to specific play performances in Civic halls. [The former are shown in parentheses.] Where possible I have indicated whether the civic building survives to the present. Those which are wholly extant are marked with an *. Those which survive in part or which survive but have been substantially altered are marked **. Additional information about particular buildings is provided in the notes.

<u>Place</u>	<u>Name of building</u>	<u>Evidence</u>
Abingdon (Berkshire)	'yelde hall'	Recorded performance ¹
Barnstaple (Devon)	Guildhall ²	Recorded performance
Bath (Somerset)	Guildhall	Recorded performance
Beverley (Yorkshire)	Common House** ³ (or 'Hance house')	Recorded performance
Blandford Forum (Dorset)	Yeld/ Guild hall ⁴	Recorded performances
Bridgwater (Somerset)	Common Hall ⁵	Recorded performances
Bristol (Bristol)	'yeld hall'	Recorded performances
Cambridge (Cambridgeshire)	Town Hall ⁶	Recorded performance ⁷
Canterbury (Kent)	Court Hall ⁸	Recorded performances
Chard (Somerset)	Common Hall	Recorded performances
Chester (Cheshire)	Common Hall ⁹	Regulatory order ¹⁰
Dorchester (Dorset)	Shire Hall ¹¹	Recorded performances
Exeter (Devon)	Guild Hall*	Recorded performances ¹²
Faversham (Kent)	Court Hall** ¹³	Recorded performances
Gloucester (Gloucestershire)	Booth Hall	Recorded performances
[Great Yarmouth] (Norfolk)	Guildhall	Regulatory order ¹⁴
Ipswich (Suffolk)	Moot Hall ¹⁵	Recorded performances ¹⁶
Kendal (Westmorland)	New Hall	Recorded performance
Leicester (Leicestershire)	Town Hall* ¹⁷	Recorded performances
Linton (Cambridgeshire)	Town House* ¹⁸	Recorded performances ¹⁹
Ludlow (Shropshire)	New House	Recorded performance
Marlborough (Wiltshire)	Guild Hall ²⁰	Recorded performance
Newcastle (Northumb.)	Merchant Court ²¹	Recorded performances
Norwich (Norfolk)	New Hall* ²² Guildhall * ²³ ('free chamber')	Recorded performance Recorded performance
Nottingham (Nottinghamshire)	Town (or Guild) Hall ²⁴	Recorded performances
Oxford (Oxfordshire)	Guild Hall ²⁵	Recorded performances ²⁶
Rye (Sussex)	Court Hall ²⁷	Recorded performances
Shrewsbury (Shropshire)	Booth Hall ²⁸	Recorded performances
Southampton (Hampshire)	Town Hall** ²⁹	Recorded performance (& regulatory orders) ³⁰
Sudbury (Suffolk)	Moot Hall	Regulatory order ³¹
York (Yorkshire)	Common Hall ³²	Recorded performance (& regulatory orders)

II

Town Halls identified as probable playing venues, 1559-1625

Indirect sources of evidence identify several other town halls as probable playing venues between 1559-1625. Where possible I have indicated whether the civic building survives to the present. Those which are wholly extant are marked with an *. Those which survive in part or which survive but have been substantially altered are marked **. Additional information about particular buildings is provided in the notes.

<u>Place</u>	<u>Name of building</u>	<u>Evidence</u>
[Boston] (Lincolnshire)	(Guild) Hall** ³³	Regulatory order ³⁴
Bridgnorth (Shropshire)	Town Hall ³⁵	Regulatory order ³⁶
Durham (Durham)	Toll Booth ³⁷	Regulatory order ³⁸
Hadleigh (Suffolk)	Guildhall** ³⁹	Regulatory orders ⁴⁰
King's Lynn (Norfolk)	Trinity Hall** ⁴¹	Regulatory order ⁴²
	St George's Hall** ⁴³	
Peterborough (Northampton.)	Town Hall ⁴⁴	Indirect evidence ⁴⁵
Stratford-on-Avon (Warw.)	Guildhall* ⁴⁶	Regulatory order ⁴⁷ (indirect evidence)
Worcester (Worcestershire)	Town Hall(or Yeald Hall)	Regulatory orders ⁴⁸
	Trinity Hall	
York (York)	St Anthony's Hall	Regulatory order ⁴⁹

¹ There are explicit references to players performing in the hall (e.g. in 1562-3), and in 1624 a civic order was passed regulating the use of the guildhall for plays in which its past use for dramatic performances is mentioned. ['Whereas the Mayor Bayliff[es] and Burgesses hath heretofore bene at greate charg[es] in Repairing and amending the glasse windowes benches and pavement[es] of the guildhall by reason of playes there suffered to be played / ffor the avoyding wherof it is this day ordered that no mayor of this Borough from hensfurthe shall geve any leave or license nor p[er]mytt or suffre any players whatsoeu[er] to play in the said Guildhall w[i]t[h]oute the consent of Eight of the principal burgesses granted at there meting in the counsell howse of the said Boroughe'. (Transcribed in *REED: Berkshire*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston, forthcoming.)

² The Guildhall used by players in Elizabethan and Jacobean Barnstaple is no longer extant, but it is known to have stood in the High Street at the entrance to the churchyard and opposite the junction with Cross Street. The building had previously been the hall and chantry chapel of the Gild of St George the Martyr and was purchased for use as a new civic hall by the borough corporation in 1532. The hall which dated back to the fifteenth century was purchased from the Prideaux family. [The town's first guildhall was built on the corner of Maiden Street, close to the Long-bridge, but it was superseded as the town hall in 1532 by the High Street building.] The second civic hall continued to be used as the town's Guildhall until it was demolished in 1826, and a new Hall was built. The early modern Guildhall was an 'impressive timber-framed building', as can be seen in surviving illustrations [see plates 1 & 2]. In style it was not dissimilar to the early modern Guildhall at Exeter, although it was not quite as lavish or grand in its decoration. As Tim Wormleighton notes, Barnstaple's guildhall appears to have resembled 'a somewhat scaled-down version' of the Exeter guildhall. [The information about Barnstaple's guildhalls was supplied by

English theatres the playing chamber would have been fitted with a stage, and possibly with permanent seating as well. The size of the playhouse remains unknown.

Performances at the Playhouse

There are no records of any performances at the playhouse, although it is possible that the theatre was used by local and visiting playing troupes, like the Wine Street playhouse.

Likewise, there is no information about its operation or the date of its opening or closure (e.g. it is not clear whether the playhouse was functioning as a theatre at the time of Sarah Barker's death). However, if the playhouse had not ceased operating before 1637, it was no doubt obliged to close in 1642, as were all theatres.

What happened to the property after 1637 is not clear. Presumably, Elinor Barker continued to live there, perhaps accompanied by her brother, William who had inherited their mother's tenancy. He may have assumed the management of the playhouse (if it was still functioning). Equally, he might have chosen to convert the property into a domestic dwelling. Had the playhouse survived to the present we might have been able to reconstruct its later history, but no traces of the theatre have been found as yet. (Most of the buildings to be found in the Redcliffe Hill area of the town today are modern, although St Mary Redcliffe's Church where the Barkers were buried still stands.)¹⁷⁹

However long its career, the Barker playhouse was, like the Wine Street theatre, a pioneering theatrical enterprise in the early modern provinces and both playhouses are a testimony to the 'diverse and competitive theatrical vitality in Bristol in the Jacobean/ Caroline period'.¹⁸⁰ For a time in the early seventeenth century Bristol may have been in 'a situation unique in the provinces', having 'two playhouses in operation, possibly simultaneously'.¹⁸¹

Conclusions

Most provincial towns in early modern England had a small and less wealthy population than London. The audiences they potentially afforded for any play performances or playhouse were, likewise, smaller and poorer, making theatres a less viable and attractive enterprise. To find any regional playhouses in early modern England is therefore striking, and, although few

¹⁷⁹ If the graves of either husband or wife were marked with a gravestone, they do not appear to have survived.

¹⁸⁰ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. xl.

¹⁸¹ Pilkinton, *REED: Bristol*, p. xl.

in number, those which existed are a further testimony to the popularity of theatre throughout Renaissance England, and demonstrate that theatrical innovation and dramatic entrepreneurs were not confined to the metropolis or to large towns.

Mutually illuminating parallels which can enrich our understanding of theatrical development in Renaissance England are to be found between the provincial playhouses described above and the metropolitan theatres of early modern England (as I have indicated at various points in this chapter). Most of the known Elizabethan and Jacobean regional theatres appear to have been indoor venues, for instance, anticipating the fact that indoor theatres were to supersede open-air amphitheatres in number and importance in Caroline London. Similarly, that each of the provincial playhouses appears to have been built by a person (or people) with no obvious theatrical connections or interests provides further evidence that the rise of the playhouse in England was largely instigated by business people, motivated by hopes of economic gain, rather than by players. Finally, the closure and later loss of each of the early provincial Elizabethan and Jacobean playhouses (and the buildings used) foreshadows the demise and physical disappearance of the more famous metropolitan playhouses of Elizabethan and Jacobean London.

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The spaces used as playing venues in the early modern English provinces were, likewise, diverse in kind and size. Performances were staged in and outside various kinds of buildings (including town halls, churches and drinking houses), and in large and small spaces (ranging from the New Hall measuring approximately 125 feet by 70 feet at Norwich, to the upper chamber of Cambridge Guild Hall measuring only 17 1/2 feet by 25 feet).¹ The variety of spaces identified as provincial playing venues is a testimony to the adaptability of regional theatre and its performers, and to the fluidity of contemporary perceptions of what could constitute a playing place.

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¹ *REED: Norwich*, ed. by David Galloway (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1984), p. lxxxiv.

The widespread and diverse dramatic activity recorded in regional England in the Elizabethan and Jacobean era not only deserves attention, but rewards investigation, as the preceding chapters demonstrate. Indeed, as I have consistently argued, our understanding and appreciation of English Renaissance theatre, and of the place of individual authors and works (such as Shakespeare and his plays), is limited if we do not consider theatrical activity and dramatic culture beyond early modern London and its liberties. Research upon regional theatre affords evidence of Elizabethan and Jacobean performances which is intriguing in its own right, and yields fascinating insights into early modern English culture and theatre's place within it.

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Barnstaple (Devon)	Guildhall ²	Recorded performance
Bath (Somerset)	Guildhall	Recorded performance
Beverley (Yorkshire)	Common House** ³ (or 'Hance house')	Recorded performance
Blandford Forum (Dorset)	Yeld/ Guild hall ⁴	Recorded performances
Bridgwater (Somerset)	Common Hall ⁵	Recorded performances
Bristol (Bristol)	'yeld hall'	Recorded performances
Cambridge (Cambridgeshire)	Town Hall ⁶	Recorded performance ⁷
Canterbury (Kent)	Court Hall ⁸	Recorded performances
Chard (Somerset)	Common Hall	Recorded performances
Chester (Cheshire)	Common Hall ⁹	Regulatory order ¹⁰
Dorchester (Dorset)	Shire Hall ¹¹	Recorded performances
Exeter (Devon)	Guild Hall*	Recorded performances ¹²
Faversham (Kent)	Court Hall** ¹³	Recorded performances
Gloucester (Gloucestershire)	Booth Hall	Recorded performances
[Great Yarmouth] (Norfolk)	Guildhall	Regulatory order ¹⁴
Ipswich (Suffolk)	Moot Hall ¹⁵	Recorded performances ¹⁶
Kendal (Westmorland)	New Hall	Recorded performance
Leicester (Leicestershire)	Town Hall* ¹⁷	Recorded performances
Linton (Cambridgeshire)	Town House* ¹⁸	Recorded performances ¹⁹
Ludlow (Shropshire)	New House	Recorded performance
Marlborough (Wiltshire)	Guild Hall ²⁰	Recorded performance
Newcastle (Northumb.)	Merchant Court ²¹	Recorded performances
Norwich (Norfolk)	New Hall* ²² Guildhall * ²³ (‘free chamber’)	Recorded performance Recorded performance
Nottingham (Nottinghamshire)	Town (or Guild) Hall ²⁴	Recorded performances
Oxford (Oxfordshire)	Guild Hall ²⁵	Recorded performances ²⁶
Rye (Sussex)	Court Hall ²⁷	Recorded performances
Shrewsbury (Shropshire)	Booth Hall ²⁸	Recorded performances
Southampton (Hampshire)	Town Hall** ²⁹	Recorded performance (& regulatory orders) ³⁰
Sudbury (Suffolk)	Moot Hall	Regulatory order ³¹
York (Yorkshire)	Common Hall ³²	Recorded performance (& regulatory orders)

II

Town Halls identified as probable playing venues, 1559-1625

Indirect sources of evidence identify several other town halls as probable playing venues between 1559-1625. Where possible I have indicated whether the civic building survives to the present. Those which are wholly extant are marked with an *. Those which survive in part or which survive but have been substantially altered are marked **. Additional information about particular buildings is provided in the notes.

<u>Place</u>	<u>Name of building</u>	<u>Evidence</u>
[Boston] (Lincolnshire)	(Guild) Hall** ³³	Regulatory order ³⁴
Bridgnorth (Shropshire)	Town Hall ³⁵	Regulatory order ³⁶
Durham (Durham)	Toll Booth ³⁷	Regulatory order ³⁸
Hadleigh (Suffolk)	Guildhall** ³⁹	Regulatory orders ⁴⁰
King's Lynn (Norfolk)	Trinity Hall** ⁴¹	Regulatory order ⁴²
	St George's Hall** ⁴³	
Peterborough (Northampton.)	Town Hall ⁴⁴	Indirect evidence ⁴⁵
Stratford-on-Avon (Warw.)	Guildhall* ⁴⁶	Regulatory order ⁴⁷ (indirect evidence)
Worcester (Worcestershire)	Town Hall(or Yeald Hall)	Regulatory orders ⁴⁸
	Trinity Hall	
York (York)	St Anthony's Hall	Regulatory order ⁴⁹

¹ There are explicit references to players performing in the hall (e.g. in 1562-3), and in 1624 a civic order was passed regulating the use of the guildhall for plays in which its past use for dramatic performances is mentioned. ['Whereas the Mayor Bayliff[es] and Burgesses hath heretofore bene at greate charg[es] in Repairing and amending the glasse windowes benches and pavement[es] of the guildhall by reason of playes there suffered to be played / ffor the avoyding wherof it is this day ordered that no mayor of this Borough from hensfurthe shall geve any leave or license nor p[er]mytt or suffre any players whatsoeu[er] to play in the said Guildhall w[i]t[h]oute the consent of Eight of the principal burgesses granted at there meting in the counsell howse of the said Boroughe'. (Transcribed in *REED: Berkshire*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston, forthcoming.)

² The Guildhall used by players in Elizabethan and Jacobean Barnstaple is no longer extant, but it is known to have stood in the High Street at the entrance to the churchyard and opposite the junction with Cross Street. The building had previously been the hall and chantry chapel of the Gild of St George the Martyr and was purchased for use as a new civic hall by the borough corporation in 1532. The hall which dated back to the fifteenth century was purchased from the Prideaux family. [The town's first guildhall was built on the corner of Maiden Street, close to the Long-bridge, but it was superseded as the town hall in 1532 by the High Street building.] The second civic hall continued to be used as the town's Guildhall until it was demolished in 1826, and a new Hall was built. The early modern Guildhall was an 'impressive timber-framed building', as can be seen in surviving illustrations [see plates 1 & 2]. In style it was not dissimilar to the early modern Guildhall at Exeter, although it was not quite as lavish or grand in its decoration. As Tim Wormleighton notes, Barnstaple's guildhall appears to have resembled 'a somewhat scaled-down version' of the Exeter guildhall. [The information about Barnstaple's guildhalls was supplied by

Tim Wormleighton, Senior Archivist, North Devon Record Office, in a private communication, 5th May, 1999.]

- ³ The guildhall (or common hall) and the 'hance house' were apparently synonymous. [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Yorkshire, East Riding*, VI, ed. by K. J. Allison (Oxford: Oxford University, 1989), p. 190.] The town hall which existed in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period had been used as a guildhall since the beginning of the sixteenth century. The building 'was a "great messuage" in Cross garths (later Register Square) which the keepers acquired by exchange in 1501. A "long chamber" there "with the great part of the hall" was repaired in 1502. Part of the house was let to the East Riding and justices from 1611 as a house of correction, and the whole of the southern half of the house was let to them from 1703 as a sessions house and house of correction. [...] It was thus only the northern half of the house which, from 1703, comprised the guildhall'. [Allison, p. 190.] Part of the original hall is preserved to the present, but the building has been altered substantially (e.g. 'A new council chamber and jury room designed by William Middleton were built in 1762 behind the existing building, part of which was also reconstructed.') [Allison, p. 190.] The exterior of 'the old building was not altered until 1832-5, when the rooms there were remodelled and a large Doric portico was added [...]. The old arched entrance was removed to a house at Woodmansey. [...] Repairs carried out in 1981-2, when the public gallery was removed [from the council chamber] revealed a 15th-century timber-framed wall and doorways of the original house and they were left exposed at the east end of the council chamber and in the kitchen above'. [Allison, p. 190.]
- ⁴ The Town Hall in Blandford was destroyed by the fire in 1731. Little is known about the building before this date. [Information provided by the Dorset Archives service in a private communication, 28th June 1999.]
- ⁵ The Hall does not survive to the present. 'Known variously in the 15th and 16th centuries as the common house, the town house, or the town hall, it was called the guildhall in the 18th century, separate rooms within the building included a burgess hall or council house, a sergeants' hall, and the 'mayor's alphabet', a small room for the corporation's library and records. A room over the burgess hall was divided in 1743. The building, which had an entrance with steps and columns, was in a poor state of repair by 1808, and its demolition was suggested. The corporation moved to the grand jury room at the assize hall in High Street in 1822, and the guildhall was probably demolished soon afterwards'. [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Somerset*, VI, ed. by R. W. Dunning (London: Oxford University, 1992), p. 202.]
- ⁶ The Cambridge guildhall, which does not survive, was 'a relatively small, two-storey building open at ground level on three sides, with an upper hall measuring 17 1/2 feet by 22 feet'. [*REED: Cambridge*, ed. by Alan H. Nelson, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1989), II, p. 725.] [See plate 15]
- ⁷ In 1605-6 John Duke and Thomas Greene, the leaders of Queen Anne's players, found themselves in trouble with the University authorities for a performance staged by the troupe at the Town Hall. The performance trespassed against the Privy Council order prohibiting play performances within five miles of the University and its precincts. The location of the performance is revealed indirectly in the Commissary's Court Book. In the Court Book it was recorded that both men had said that 'master Maior did give them absolute authoritye to playe in the Towne Hall and did give order to come to buyld theire Stage and take downe the glasse windowes there and did also [...] give them the Key of the Towne Hall.' [*REED: Cambridge*, ed. by Alan H. Nelson, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1989), I, p. 403.] As Nelson notes: 'This time, the mayor's authority proved meaningless against the power of the university.' [Nelson, II, p. 725.]
- ⁸ The Court Hall (or Guild Hall) of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period stood 'in the High Street next door to the Red Lion Inn, and on the north west corner of what is now Guildhall street'. ['Canterbury Guildhall', a paper by Anne M. Oakley, Senior Research Archivist, Canterbury Cathedral Archives, June 1999, p. 1. This paper was kindly supplied by the author.] It was built after an earlier Guild Hall on the same site was demolished in 1437. The building was a 'timber-framed structure with lathe and plaster in-filling, tie-beams and a collar braced roof. The walls were plastered or daubed inside and out, and the roof tiled.' [Oakley, pp. 1-2.] As Oakley records, 'the carpenters' specification' for the new Hall survives. 'The builders were Alan Etchygham, Richard Wodeman, John and William Tuttewyf, Pyerys Colyn and William Halakynđenje. [...] Five citizens of Canterbury bargained with these six to build a new guildhall or "Ildalle" as it was called

in the agreement, 41 feet 10 inches in length with a dais and side benches. At the south end of the hall were to be two chambers in a three storied building, and at the north end a chamber with a jettied chamber over it'. [Oakley, p. 1. The reference for the original document is Canterbury Cathedral Archives, Woodruff's List, Bundle lvi a, no. 7.] The building was remodelled and possibly enlarged in the nineteenth century (e.g. in 1835) and various repairs were carried out in the first half of the twentieth century. [Oakley, pp. 2-3.] By 1950 the building had become unsafe. (For example, the 'brickwork of the Guildhall street wall was in very poor condition; and the ends of the tie-beams resting on the wall plate had rotted away thus transmitting the outward thrust of the rafters directly to the brick wall causing it to lean out as much as six inches [...] over the pavement.'). [Oakley, p. 3.] As a result, 'it was regretfully decided that it would be practically impossible to repair the building without rebuilding it almost from ground level. The Ministry [of Public Buildings and Works] agreed; and in November 1950 the Guildhall was demolished'. [Oakley, p. 3.]

- ⁹ The first moot hall was 'in Mothalle Lane which later became Common Hall Lane off Bridge Street.' In 1545 'a new common hall was constructed out of the former St Nicholas Chapel in Northgate Street. St Nicholas Chapel was originally built in 1280. By 1687 the building was in ruins and a new hall was built between 1695-1698 just north of the present Town Hall in Northgate Street.' A theatre 'was erected by a company of proprietors in 1773 on the site of the old Common Hall and this in turn became a music hall in 1855. Today a shop occupies the building.' [Esther Williams, Archivist, Chester Archives, information kindly provided in a private communication (8 July, 1999).]
- ¹⁰ The regulatory order passed in 1615-16 made explicit reference to players having been allowed 'to Acte their obscene and vnlawful Plaies or tragedies in the Comon Hall of this Citie'. It also prohibited performances in the Common Hall 'or in anie other place within this Citie or the Liberties therof in the night time or after vje of the clocke in the eveninge'. [REED: *Chester*, ed. by Lawrence M. Clopper (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto; London: Manchester University, 1979) p. 293.]
- ¹¹ The Shire Hall used for play performances in the Jacobean period was rebuilt in 1797, although it had been repaired and added to at various points during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (e.g. repairs and renovations in 1638 included damming 'the old well' and rebuilding some of the Hall's walls). [Cited in J. Hutchins, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset*, ed. by W. Skipp and J. W. Hodson, 3rd edn, 4 vols (London: Nichols, 1865; repr. Trowbridge: Redwood, 1973), III, p. 372. [The building which replaced it is that which stands today.]
- ¹² The players who visited the Guild Hall (which survives to the present) are most likely to have performed in the hall (measuring 19 metres x 7.65 metres), although, theoretically, performances could have been staged in the small first-floor council chamber (post-1594) as well. [See plate 4]
- ¹³ The Market Hall built in Faversham in 1574 was 'converted into a Guildhall in 1604'. In 1819 the upper part of the Hall was rebuilt. The altered building survives to the present: 'The ground floor is open on timber arcades, making two naves'. [*The Buildings of England: N E and East Kent*, ed. by John Newman, 3rd edn (London: Penguin, 1969; repr. 1983), p. 318.]
- ¹⁴ In 1595-6 the corporation 'agreed that forasmuche as the game players haue bine heretofore licensed by Mr Bayliffe to playe in the guyldehall to the great annoyauns and offenses of many, [...] from henceforth the Bayliffe for the tyme beinge shall not license or suffer the game players to playe in the guyldehall'. The order reveals that the Guildhall had been used by 'game players', a phrase used elsewhere in the Great Yarmouth records in relation to theatrical players. [John Wasson and David Galloway, eds, 'Records of Plays and Players in Norfolk and Suffolk, 1330-1642', *Malone Society: Collections*, XI (Oxford: Oxford University, 1980-1), p. 15.]
- ¹⁵ Although the Moot Hall is no longer extant, visual evidence of its external appearance has been preserved. [See plate 8b for an engraving of the Moot hall published in 1785 from a drawing of 1769.] As Webb records: 'The main castellated section with external staircase, originally the meeting place of the Corpus Christi Gild, was converted from, or erected immediately to the north of, the redundant medieval church of St Mildred. Together with the adjoining gabled, brick building which was probably added c. 1449, it contained a hall, courtroom, treasury, kitchen, and several other rooms which were used for a variety of private and public purposes'. The hall was demolished in the nineteenth century. Its site is today occupied by the mid-Victorian Town hall. [John Webb, ed., *The Town Finances of Elizabethan Ipswich: Select Treasurers' and Chamberlains'*

Accounts, Suffolk Record Society (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1996).]

- ¹⁶ A regulatory order preventing the use of the Moot Hall by players was passed in 1614, providing indirect evidence of the hall's use as a theatrical venue as well.
- ¹⁷ The Leicester Guildhall survives to the present. Sections of the building have been remodelled and extensive renovation and conservation work has been carried out at the Guildhall during this century, but it is generally well-preserved. The Great Hall, in which the play performances at the Hall are likely to have been staged, survives, little changed since the early seventeenth century: 'The Hall has five bays and is 62 ft long, 20 ft wide and 27 ft high [See plate 6]. The three eastern bays (nearest to the Cathedral) are the oldest and date back to c 1390, forming the original Hall of the Gild.' [Pete Bryan and Sue Cooper, 'The Leicester Guildhall: A Short History and Guide', a pamphlet printed by Leicester City Council, no date, p. 12.] The Minstrels' Gallery is not original. It came 'from the old Exchange building in the Market Place, built in 1748 and demolished c 1848.' [Bryan and Cooper, p. 13.]
- ¹⁸ The town house or guildhall is described in *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely* (Volume VI): 'In 1507 Nicholas Wickham, then parish priest, left [...] two marks towards a new guildhall. In 1508 Pembroke College leased out a plot of rectory land by the causeway running north-west from the church as a site for the hall, which was nearly completed in 1523. Since it stood on leasehold ground it escaped confiscation when the guilds were suppressed.' It became known as the Townhouse and was 'converted to parish uses.' [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely*, VI, ed. by A. P. M. Wright (Oxford: Oxford University, 1978), p. 100.]
 The building continued to be known as the Townhouse until 1694, when the lease of the property to the town ended. 'From 1694-1912 the building was used as a farm house by the farmers who leased the Rectory lands from Pembroke College. In 1912 the building was sold for £500-£600 to Mrs Berney Ficklin (of Linton House, next to it) and is still a private house today.' (See plate 9a) [Information kindly provided by Garth Collard, Chairman of the Local History Society, in a private communication (23 July, 1999).] 'The building [...] is timber-framed, with a jettied upper storey on two sides and an original arched doorway with carved spandrels on the south' (Wright, p. 100); and according to David White, who now lives at what is known as 'The Old Guildhall', the 'two parts of the current building are much as they were built.' [This information was kindly provided by David White in a private communication, 22nd June, 1999. The following quotations from White are taken from the same letter.] Wright notes, in *The Victoria History* that the house also contains 'some original moulded ceiling beams'. [Wright, p. 100.] White describes these as 'carved, presumably at some expense' (White). The original door to the house was 'in the side of the building.' This is now a window 'but a carved Tudor rose above each corner is still present. An outside stairway attached to the house was believed to be the way to the upper storey' (White). The players who hired the Townhouse in the sixteenth century may have performed in the chamber in the larger half of the upper storey, as this would have been the largest area available. The remainder of the upper storey was probably not available for use: 'It is thought that the smaller section [of the upper storey] was for the warden or custodian' (White).
- ¹⁹ Several groups of players paid Linton's churchwardens for the 'vse of the Towne house' (e.g. in 1579 six pence was received 'of plaiers for the vse of the towne house'. (Transcribed by Anne Brannen in *REED: Cambridgeshire*, forthcoming.)
- ²⁰ 'A guildhall, which may have stood on the north side of High Street at its east end, was mentioned in 1270. The building or its successor was repaired in 1575 and 1583. [...] That building, apparently inadequate for county quarter sessions for which temporary buildings were provided, was replaced c.1630 by a new guildhall or town hall, incorporating a market house, built at the east end of High Street on the site of the market or high cross. That town hall, burned down in 1653, was rebuilt on the same site in 1654-5'. As Crawley's account reveals, the town hall of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period was replaced during the Caroline era and does not appear to survive. [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Wiltshire*, XII, ed. by D. A. Crawley (London: Oxford University, 1983), pp. 214-15.]
- ²¹ The Merchant Court was rebuilt in 1823. [*The Buildings of England: Northumberland*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner (London: Penguin, 1957), p. 234.] It formed only one part of a complex of civic buildings in Elizabethan Newcastle, standing to the east side of the Town Chamber, and above the building earlier known as the Maison Dieu. The upper chamber used as the Court appears to have

- been added in the second half of the sixteenth century. [S. Middlebrook, *Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Its Growth and achievement* (Newcastle: Kemsley House, 1950), p. 59.]
- ²² The new hall, converted from the nave of the Blackfriars church, 'measures about 125 x 70 feet', and 'the chancel which became the chapel of the common hall and is now called the Blackfriars Hall, measures about 100 x 33 feet'. [REED: *Norwich*, ed. by David Galloway (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1984), p. lxxxiv.]
- ²³ The Assembly Chamber (or 'free chamber') in the guildhall 'measures 36 x 30 feet'. [Galloway, p. lxxxiv.]
- ²⁴ The medieval Guildhall 'stood on the south side of Weekday Cross'. The Council Hall was on the first floor and reached by an 'external covered stair'. [Information supplied by Adrian Henstock, Principal Archivist, Nottinghamshire Archives, in a private letter, 18 June, 1999.] (See plate 9b)
- ²⁵ Oxford guildhall included an Upper and a Lower building, both of which incorporated a 'hall' chamber. The Upper building measured approximately 60 feet x 31 feet, with its main hall on the first floor. The Lower guildhall, which appears to have been of similar dimensions, also had a first floor hall. [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Oxfordshire*, IV, ed. by Alan Crossley (Oxford: Oxford University, 1979), p. 331.]
- ²⁶ In 1561-2 the Earl of Warwick's players were paid vi s. viij d. 'when they playd in the guyld hall theight day of Iune'. (Transcribed in REED: *Oxford City*, ed. by Alexandra Johnston and Diana Wyatt, forthcoming.) In 1579-80 an order restricting the use of the Guildhall by players was passed: 'no Mayor of this Cytie or his deputie from henceforth shall geve leave to any players to playe w[i]thin this Guilde hall or the Lower hall or in the Guilde hall courte w[i]thowt consent of the Counsell of this Cytie' (Johnston and Wyatt, forthcoming). However, at least one performance in the Hall occurred after this date. In 1585-6 the Earl of Essex's men were allowed to play 'in the yeld hall courte'. (Johnston and Wyatt, forthcoming.)
- ²⁷ The Court Hall does not survive. It was 'replaced in 1742 by the present Town Hall'. The old hall apparently occupied part of a plot of land measuring 200 ft in length and 43 ft. in breadth, near the churchyard. [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Sussex*, IX, ed. by L. F. Saltzman (London: Oxford University, 1937), p. 40.]
- ²⁸ In the 1760s or 1770s, antiquarian Thomas Phillips described the Booth hall, which no longer survives, 'as an old, low, timber building, consisting of a large room 63 feet in length, and 25 1/2 feet in breadth. [Cited in REED: *Shropshire*, ed. by Alan B. Somerset, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1994), II, p. 385.]
- ²⁹ The Medieval guildhall 'occupies the whole of the upper floor over the Bargate' (one of the medieval town gates). [*The Buildings of England: Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner and David Lloyd (London: Penguin, 1967), p. 535.] The earliest reference to the Guildhall at the Bargate apparently dates from 1401. The building was later superseded in importance by 'the 18th century Audit House which stood halfway down the High Street'. In 1852 the Guildhall 'was remodelled [...] as a Court of Justice and used as a police court until 1953. ['The Bargate: A Quick Guide', revised from 'Bargate Museum a Quick Guide' by the Southampton Museum Education Service (1979) and an article, 'Heraldry at the Bargate', by Sheila Thompson and Simon Hardy (1996), p. 6.] After this the building was used for a period as a museum. This was closed in 'the early 1980s'. [Jill Neale, Administrative Assistant, Cultural Services, Southampton City Council in a private communication, 14 June, 1999.] Pevsner and Lloyd described the building in 1967: 'The hall is entered through a doorway of fascinating shape, irregularly cinque-foiled, the upper foil pointed, the two middle foils on the side rounded. [...]; the roof is c 19'. [Pevsner and Lloyd, p. 535.] Today, the upstairs chamber remains a 'large area with a modern concrete roof' and apparently measures c. 70 by 45 feet. [Neale.]
- ³⁰ In 1561-2 a payment was made by the town to 'sir Ihon foscuis players that plaid before Mr Mayre at the towne hayle'. [Transcribed in REED: *Hampshire*, ed. by Peter Greenfield (with Jane Cowling), forthcoming.] Further evidence that the Hall was used for plays is afforded by two civic orders preventing future performances at the Hall. In 1619-20 the town authorities complained of the damages caused as a result of 'sufferinge stage players to act ther enterludes ther' and ordered that 'hereafter yf anie such staige or poppett plaiers must be admitted in this towne That they provide their places for thier representacions in their Innes or el[<.>] where they can best provide But euer be debarred for vsinge the like in the Towne hall'. [Greenfield and Cowling, forthcoming.] Presumably, the order was not enforced with much success, as in 1622-3 the corporation

complained that 'the graunting of leave to Stage players or players of Interludes, and the like, to Act and represent their Interludes playes and shewes in the townehall is very hurtfull troublesome and inconvenyent', and again ordered that 'from hensforth noe leave shall bee graunted to any Stage Players or Interlude players or to any other person or persons resortinge to this Towne to Act shewe or represent any manner of Interludes or playes or any other sportes or pastymes whatsoever in the said hall'. [Greenfield and Cowling, forthcoming.]

³¹ In 1606-7 the Sudbury authorities passed an order prohibiting play performances in the recently decorated Moot Hall, revealing that the Hall had been regularly used for play performances in the past. They stated that the Hall had been brought to 'much ruyn and decaye' as a result of 'diuers disordered and vnrule persons resortinge thither to playes of enterludes and other playes heretofore.' [Wasson and Galloway, p. 198.]

³² The Common Hall (or Guild Hall) which stood in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period dated back to mid-fifteenth century when it was built at the joint expense of the Mayor and Commonalty, and the Guild of St Christopher. ['The guild was to have the use of it for certain days each year, and to keep its wine in the cellar. The agreement (between the town and the guild) stipulated that the new hall should be 42 royal ells long [...] with a chamber at the West end, a cellar at the East, and other buildings including a pantry and a buttery. Work on the hall was under way at least by 1449-50'.] The Hall was built 'in the perpendicular style, with the open timber-work roof supported on two rows of octagonal oak pillars resting on moulded stone bases'; and it measured 93 feet by 43 feet (and was 'nearly 30 feet high'). ['The Guildhall of the City of York', York City Archives Information pamphlet (27/07A), no page number.] (See plate 14)

In 1942 the Guildhall was 'reduced to a shell during an air raid.' However, in 1956 it was decided that the Hall should be restored and an 'exact replica' was built. (It was reopened in 1960 and survives to the present). [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the City of York*, ed. by P. M. Tillott (London: Oxford University, 1961), p. 543.]

³³ In *The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire*, Pevsner and Harris describe the Guildhall at Boston as 'a late fifteenth century hall much rebuilt externally and altered internally'. The brickwork externally 'is mostly Georgian'. Georgian alterations inside include, 'Tuscan supports and an arched door to the main stairs [...] [and] a Georgian gallery'. The council chamber is also Georgian. [*The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner and John Harris (London: Penguin, 1964; repr. 1973), p. 474.] The building now houses Boston Guildhall Museum.

The Hall was built in 1450 'for the Guild of St Mary' and became the town hall in 1546. ['Look at Boston Guildhall Museum', Museum pamphlet (Doncaster: Bessacarr Prints, 1992), p. 1. This pamphlet was provided by N. Pulford, Assistant Curator.] Any performances in the Hall might have been staged in the first floor banqueting hall. 'This room was originally used by members of the Guild of St Mary as their chapel [but] when the Guildhall became the Town Hall, this room became the Banqueting Hall'. ['Boston Guildhall', p. 2.]

³⁴ In 1578 the town authorities agreed 'that there shalbe no mo playes nor interludes [...] in the church nor in the chauncell nor in the hall nor Scolle howse'. By implication, each of these places had been used for play performances in the past. [Stanley J. Kahrl, ed., 'Records of Plays and Players in Lincolnshire, 1300-1585', Malone Society: Collections, VIII (Oxford: Oxford University, 1969 [1974]), p. 5.]

³⁵ Somerset records that the Town hall 'was located outside one of the gates to the town but was demolished before the parliamentary forces laid siege to the town during the Civil War'. [Somerset, II, p. 384.]

³⁶ In 1601-2 the civic authorities ordered that 'from henceforth no playars of comedies Tragedies or other stage playes shalbe permytted to be played in the Counsell howse or Towne Hall', implying 'that it had been a usual playing place'. [Somerset, II, p. 21.]

³⁷ The Tollbooth (or Guildhall) does not survive. In 1928 William Page recorded that the Mayor's Chamber 'occupies the site of the old Guildhall'. However, contemporary records provide information about its location and make-up. The building 'stood at the side of the market-place, and consisted of shops and stalls on the ground floor, surmounted by an upper storey containing a court-room of some size, which was used for the borough court and for other civic purposes. The building had been rebuilt by Bishop Tunstall' in the sixteenth century. [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Durham*, III, ed. by William Page (London: St. Catherine Press, 1928), p. 59, p. 34.] Presumably, any play performances would have been staged in

the large court room.

³⁸ In 1608 the civic authorities passed an order restricting the use of the Toll booth for plays in the future: 'it is likewise consented and agreed That the Maior for the time beinge shall not att anye time hereafter *permitt* or suffer anye plaiers whatsoeuer to plaie in the Toolebooth. Excepte his *Maiesties* plaiers or such other as the saide Maior and Aldermen shall in there wisdomes and discretions thinke fitt to allow of vpon paine of euerie one offendinge herein to paie x s to be levied as aforesaide'. [Transcribed by Tom Craik in *REED: Durham*, ed. by Tom Craik and John McKinnell, forthcoming.] The passing of the order suggests (but does not state explicitly) that there had been performances in the Toll Booth in the past. At the same time, future performances by approved troupes such as the King's players are not ruled out.

³⁹ The timber-framed building known as The Guildhall / Town Hall is 'a very complex building. A three-storied range with shops and almshouses facing north on to the churchyard was the original Market House, which was enlarged by the addition of two wings to the west and east. Behind this, and eventually joined to it, was erected the two-storey Guildhall with the meeting hall on the first floor'. [Information kindly provided by Sue Andrews, Joint Archivist at the Hadleigh Archive, in a private letter, 21 st June, 1999.] At the suppression of the guilds the complex of buildings (including the Guild hall) passed into the hands of the Crown, but the Town purchased them for their own use in 1573. The buildings 'housed a variety of activities concurrently including various parts of the weekly market, the House of Correction [...] and Gaol, [and] a Grammar School' (Andrews). Where plays might have been performed is not known. However, the first-floor meeting hall, also known as the 'Long Room', would have been one of the spaces potentially available for theatrical use (see plate 13). [*The Buildings of England: Suffolk*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner, revised by Enid Radcliffe, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 1961; repr. 1974), p. 245.] As the 1596 regulation prohibited play performances 'in the guildhall or yard without payment to the bailiffs [of the market]', (own emphasis) it is also possible that plays were performed outdoors in the Guildhall 'yard.' [Hadleigh Archive, Hadleigh Market Feoffment Book, 1534-1619, 04/ 01, p. 249. Reference provided by Sue Andrews.] Andrews also suggests that the 'Guildhall Garden' was a possible venue.

The Old Town Hall (or Guildhall proper) only survives in part to the present. In the 1850s the New Town Hall was built and 'in the process two bays of the original Guildhall [...] were demolished in order to accommodate new public rooms on the site' (Andrews).

⁴⁰ In 1596 it was agreed 'that it shall not be lawful of any players to play of their plays in the guildhall or yard without payment to the bailiffs' [of the market]. [Hadleigh Archive, Hadleigh Market Feoffment Book, 04/ 01, p. 249. Reference provided by Sue Andrews.] Then, in 1598-9 an agreement was recorded between John Allen (who was appointed overseer of the poor) and the town. It was agreed 'that he shall not suffer any playes to be made within the guildhall without consent of syx of the Cheife Inhabitants of the towne vnder ther handwriting and further that all such playes as shall be made there may be ended in the day time'. Although the latter agreement seeks to regulate dramatic activity in the hall, it is anticipated that the hall will be used for plays. Both agreements suggest that play performances in the Hall were not unknown. [Wasson and Galloway, p. 163.]

⁴¹ Trinity Guildhall survives as part of King's Lynn's municipal buildings and preserves its sixteenth century exterior 'of flint and stone in a chequer point' (see plate 5). [*The Buildings of England: N W and South Norfolk*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner (London: Penguin, 1962; repr. 1973), p. 230.] The Guildhall 'was shortened by one bay on the first floor in 1766 when the Assembly and Card Rooms were erected, but still retains its original length on the ground floor. The floor of the Guildhall is of stone laid on sand over the brick vaulting of the undercroft. The Guildhall retains its original C15 roof. Originally each bay of the side walls had a window but now only two at the northern end exist. The stone of the great south window was replaced in the 1760s presumably to the original design.' [Information kindly provided by David Pitcher, Design Services Unit Manager, King's Lynn Council, in a private communication (5 July, 1999).]

The Guildhall stands next to the Gaol built in 1784. The hall was built for the Guild of Holy Trinity after the Guild's first hall burnt down in 1421. [Vanessa Parker, *The Making of King's Lynn* (London and Chichester: Phillimore, 1971), p. 143.] 'The new Gildhall took 16 years to finish at a total cost of £220, about half the annual income of the gild. The plot on which it was laid out was long and narrow, so the Hall was planned at right angles to the street and an entry passage left

down the west side'. [Parker, p. 143.] The hall 'was two storeys high, the main room or hall on the first floor being raised on a vaulted undercroft entered by an outside staircase from the west at its south end.' [Parker, p. 143.]

Any play performances would have been staged in the large first-floor hall. Here, players would have found the decor simple: 'The hall was a single space internally with a stone flagged floor strewn with rushes, and with built-in seats in the panelling of the lower parts of the walls. The upper walls were hung with cloths which, when they were renewed in 1635, were of red and green say'. [Parker, p. 143.] The hall had glazed windows and, from the sixteenth century the hall was heated. As in most early modern guild and civic halls, furnishings were few but players would have found one or more tables. 'In 1579 a new wainscot table inlaid with the Queen's arms was made for the Hall, and there was probably another large table for feasting and Council meetings'. [Parker, p. 143.]

⁴² In 1594 the corporation passed an order that 'ther shall not hereafter be any playes suffered to be played either in this hall called Trenitie hall or the hall called St George hall'. [Wasson and Galloway, p. 66.] Their use of the word 'hereafter' suggests that there had been performances in both buildings previously.

⁴³ The building, which stands in King's Street, was built for the guild of St George in the fifteenth century, and is '107 feet long and 29 feet wide' (see plate 10) ['A History of St. George's Guildhall, King's Lynn', ed. by Paul Richards, The National Trust, Norfolk (Ipswich: The Wolsey Press, 1992). There are no page numbers in the pamphlet.] The Hall is two-storied. 'As in the Trinity Hall, the main room was on the first floor above an undercroft [...]. By 1602, [...] a chimney had been inserted in the wall'; and the hall was lit from the north and south by 'large windows with four-centred arch heads'. [Parker, p. 146.] In 1547 when the Hall was acquired from the guild by the Council the King street property was described as 'a hall with a cellar, pantry and kitchen annexed, and had numerous outbuildings in the yard behind'. [Parker, p. 147.] As at Trinity Hall, any play performances are likely to have been staged in the first floor-hall.

The building has served many purposes and been remodelled at various times since the sixteenth century (e.g. in 1588 it was 'leased by George Waldon to start a school for learning French', and in the eighteenth century a Georgian theatre was built within it). [Parker, p. 147.] 'By 1945 St George's Guildhall was derelict and in danger of being demolished for the expansion of a nearby garage. It was saved by Alexander Penrose who bought the building.' [Richards.] The shell of the building was restored in 1951 for 'theatrical' use by Marshall Sisson. However, 'the roof of the hall has lost its tie-beams and kingposts' and the 'undercroft with segmental tunnel-vault' is 'only partially preserved'. [Pevsner, *NW and South Norfolk*, p. 234.]

⁴⁴ The sixteenth century town hall does not appear to survive, but was located in 'the market-place', as is the extant town hall (built 1671). [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Northamptonshire*, II, ed. by R. M. Serjeantson and W. Ryland D. Adkins (London: Constable, 1906), p. 428.]

⁴⁵ Indirect evidence of players performing in the town hall appears to be found in the Bailiff's records for 1620-1. In this year three shillings and four pence was 'receyued of players for breakinge downe ye stayres of ye towne Hall'. The fact that the players had access to the town hall stairs suggests that they were guests at the Hall, and were probably using the building as a playing venue, the damage occurring either during a production or during performance preparations. [*Peterborough Local Administration: Minutes and Accounts of the Feoffees and Governors of the City Lands*, ed. by W. J. Mellows (Kettering: Leader Press, 1937), p. 30.]

⁴⁶ The guildhall survives to the present, forming part of the King Edward Grammar School in Stratford-upon-Avon. The hall chamber was partitioned for a time into three chambers but was restored to its original state in 1894. The Hall is 'a long, low room' and measures approximately 70 x 18 1/2 feet. [H. Snowden Ward and Catherine Weed Ward, *Shakespeare's Town and Times* (London: Dawbarn & Ward, 1896), p. 80.]

⁴⁷ In 1602 the corporation stated that 'there shalbe no plays or enterlewds playd in the chamber' or 'the guild hall,' suggesting that the Guild Hall had been used by players in the past. [Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Stratford-upon-Avon Council Minute Books, 1593-1628, B, BRU/2/2, p. 95.] Indirect evidence for at least one Guild Hall performance is also found in the corporation records. In 1587-8 the town rewarded several acting companies, including the Queen's Men (xx s). The accounts record another expense relating to the Queen's Men's visit, a payment

being made 'for mendinge of a forme that was broken by the quenes players'. ['The Minutes and Accounts of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon, IV, 1586-1592', transcribed by Richard Savage, introduction and notes by Edgar I. Fripp, *The Dugdale Society*, X (Oxford: Oxford University, 1929), p. 31.] As this payment occurs in the civic accounts it suggests that the form was civic property and therefore part of the Guild hall furnishings. While the form might have been borrowed for a performance elsewhere it is more likely that the troupe performed their civic sponsored play in the Hall.

- ⁴⁸ In 1622 a corporate order was passed stating that no play performances should be 'had or made in the vpper end of the Twone hall of this Cyttie nor Councell Chamber vsed by anie players whatsoever, and that noe players bee had or made in Yeald by nyght tyme, And yf anie players bee admytted to play in the Yeald hall to bee admytted to play in the lower end onelie'. [REED: *Herefordshire and Worcestershire*, ed. by David N. Klausner (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1990), p. 453-4.] By implication, the Town hall (and its upper end) had been previously used for plays, and the Council anticipated further play productions in the town hall. Presumably, the order was not entirely effective as in 1635-6 a new order was passed preventing play performances and drinking in the Council Chamber, as a result of damages caused to the Chamber by these two activities (Klausner, p. 457). Meanwhile, in 1626 the corporation ordered that 'noe plaies shall bee acted by night in the Trinitie Hall of the Cittie' (another civic building this period), suggesting that players had been using this hall for performances (at night) as well. [Klausner, p. 455.] A record made in the City Accounts in 1587-8 may provide evidence of playing at Trinity Hall in the Elizabethan period too. A payment was recorded 'to the Quenes players and to others, expences at the Trynytie Hall'. [Klausner, p. 448.] The record may allude to entertainment received by the Queen's Men and others at Trinity Hall, but it could also mean that in this year the Hall was the location for the players' performance.

Neither building survives to the present but we do have information about the make-up of the town hall. Valentine Green described the old hall in 'A Survey of the City of Worcester' (1796): 'The old town hall was a large structure of timber, of longer extent than the present; it had a piazza in front, adjoining to which, next to Cooken street, was a range of shops facing the High Street, the back parts of which commanded a view of the Nisi Prius court, in the Guildhall. [...] The building of the hall was open to the roof, and lighted by a large window at the north-end. The courts of justice were situated facing each other, at the extreme ends of the hall, and elevated considerably above the level of its general flooring. Internally, on the right of the Nisi Prius court, advancing towards the opposite end, was the prison, the windows of which were under the piazza, and facing the High Street. Nearly opposite to the prison, on the left side of the Nisi Prius court, was the residence of the gaoler, who occupied it as a public-house, over which was a chamber for the petty jury. At the north end of the piazza was the mayor's court, near to the crown bar. [...] Near to this bar a large gallery was provided for auditors at the trials. Over the line of the piazza was the council chamber, a spacious large room, lighted by a series of small windows in front of the building towards the High-street'. [Cited in Klausner, p. 311.] The latter is presumably the council chamber from which players were barred in 1622.

- ⁴⁹ In 1592 the Council passed an order which stated that 'no players shalbe pmitted to playe anye manner of playes either in the same Common Hall or in St. Anthony's Halle at any tyme or tymes hereafter'. [Sybil Rosenfeld, 'Dramatic Companies in the Provinces in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Theatre Notebook*, 8 (1953-4), 55-58 (p. 57).] This suggests that St Anthony's Hall had been used for plays in the past or that the corporation anticipated requests to use the hall as an alternative to the Common Hall (where performances had often been staged in the past but where they were now prohibited). The Hall was certainly used for play performances at a later date: 'between March and July of 1703 three companies were playing in St. Anthony's Hall'. [Tillott, p. 246.] The building has been altered in various ways since the sixteenth century. In 1828-9, for instance, the main staircase was erected, and the hall 'was extensively restored after the Second World War'. The surviving building was 'opened as the Borthwick Institute of Historical Research in 1953'. [Tillott, p. 483.]

Appendix ii

Towns Passing Orders Regulating Drama in their Town Halls, 1559-1625

<i>Place</i>	<i>Year</i>
Abingdon (Berkshire)	1624 ¹
Boston (Lincolnshire)	1578 ²
Bridgnorth (Shropshire)	1601-2 ³
Bristol (Avon)	1585 ⁴
Chester (Cheshire)	1615-6 ⁵
Durham (Durham)	1608 ⁶
Great Yarmouth (Norfolk)	1595-6 ⁷
Hadleigh (Suffolk)	1596, 1598-9 ⁸
Ipswich (Suffolk)	1614 ⁹
King's Lynn (Norfolk)	1594 ¹⁰
Leicester (Leicestershire)	1582-3 ¹¹
Oxford (Oxfordshire)	1579-80 ¹²
Southampton (Hampshire)	1619-20, 1622-3 ¹³
Stratford-upon-Avon (Warwickshire)	1602 [1611-2] ¹⁴
Sudbury (Suffolk)	1606-7 ¹⁵
Worcester (Worcestershire)	1622 ¹⁶
York (Yorkshire)	1582, 1592 ¹⁷

¹ *REED: Berkshire*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston, forthcoming.

² Stanley J. Kahrl, ed., 'Records of Plays and Players in Lincolnshire, 1300-1585', Malone Society: Collections, VIII (Oxford: Oxford University, 1969 [1974]), p. 5.

³ *REED: Shropshire*, ed. by J. Alan B. Somerset, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1994), I, p. 21

⁴ In 1585 the Council passed an ordinance stating that 'noe mayor of this Cytie shall lycense or permytte any players whatsoever to playe in the Guildhall of Bristoll at any tyme hereafter, vpon the like payne of xl s. to be payde by the Mayor as afforesaid vnles suche players doe playe there before the Mayor and his Bretherne.' [*REED: Bristol*, ed. by Mark C. Pilkinton (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1997), p. 129.]

⁵ *REED: Chester*, ed. by Lawrence M. Clopper (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto; London: University of Manchester, 1979), pp. 292-3

⁶ *REED: Durham*, ed. by Tom Craik and John McKinnell, forthcoming.

⁷ 'Records of Plays and Players in Norfolk and Suffolk, 1330-1642', ed. by John Wasson and David Galloway, Malone Society: Collections, XI (Oxford: Oxford University, 1981), p. 15.

⁸ Hadleigh Archive, Market Feoffment Book, 1534-1619, 04/01, p. 249. [Reference supplied by Sue Andrews, Joint Archivist at Hadleigh Archive.]

Wasson and Galloway, p. 163.

⁹ Wasson and Galloway, p. 184.

¹⁰ Wasson and Galloway, p. 66.

¹¹ *REED: Leicestershire*, ed. by Alice B. Hamilton, forthcoming.

¹² *REED: Oxford City*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Diana Wyatt, forthcoming.

¹³ *REED: Hampshire*, ed. by Peter Greenfield and Jane Cowling, forthcoming.

¹⁴ Levi Fox, *The Borough Town of Stratford-upon-Avon* (Norwich: Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon 1953), p. 143. In 1602 the Stratford-upon-Avon corporation ordered that there be no 'no pleys or enterlewdes playd' in 'the guild hall'. [Stratford-upon-Avon, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Stratford-upon-Avon Council Minutes, (1593-1628) B, BRU2 / 2, p. 95.] The 1611-2 order does not explicitly prohibit play performances in the Guild Hall, but as the regulation was meant to be a re-enforcement of the earlier order, increasing the fine for breaking the original order, Guild hall performances were, again, implicitly prohibited: 'The inconuenience of plaies beinge verie seriouslie

considered of with the [v]nlwafullnes, and howe contrarie sufferance of them is againste the orders hearetofore made, and againste the examples of other well governed citties and Burrowes the companie heare are consented and theie conclude that the penaltie of x s. imposed in mr Bakers yeare for breakinge the order shall from henceforth be x l: (i.e. ten pounds) vpon the breakers of that order'. [Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Stratford-upon-Avon Council Minutes, B, BRU2 /2, p. 226.]

¹⁵ Wasson and Galloway, p. 198.

¹⁶ *REED: Herefordshire/ Worcestershire*, ed. by David N. Klausner (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1990), pp. 453-4

¹⁷ The 1582 order limited players visiting the city to playing 'but twise in the common hall [...] viz once before the Lord Maoir and aldermen &c. and thother before the Commons'. [*REED: York*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, 2 vols (London: Manchester University; Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1979), I, p. 399] The 1592 order prohibited play performances in the Common Hall and St Anthony's Hall. [Sybil Rosenfeld, 'Dramatic Companies in the Provinces in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries', *Theatre Notebook*, 8 (1953-4), 55-58 (p. 57).]

Appendix iiiCasting Scheme for *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York*

[For a company of 15 players]

Player 1.	Warwick, Messenger (V. 4)
Player 2.	Edward
Player 3.	Richard (Duke of Gloucester)
Player 4.	York, King Lewis, Hastings, Messenger (II. 2)
Player 5.	Henry VI, Oxford's Post (V. 1)
Player 6.	Young Clifford, the Mayor of York, Huntsman, Pembroke, Post (V. 1)
Player 7.	Northumberland, Keeper 1, Oxford, Sir John Mortimer
Player 8.	Clarence, Westmorland
Player 9.	Montague, Soldier 1, Rivers, Somerfield
Player 10.	Messenger (II. 1), Soldier 2, Somerset, Tutor, Keeper 2, Cumberland
Player 11.	Exeter, Post (III. 3), Montgomery, Stanley, Messenger (IV. 1), Hugh Mortimer
Player 12.*	Earl of Rutland, Nurse, Lady Bona
Player 13. *	Earl of Richmond, Prince Edward, Messenger (III. 2)
Player 14. *	Lady Grey, Messenger (I. 2, II. 1, IV. 8), Norfolk
Player 15. *	Margaret

(Those players marked * could have been boy players and therefore are cast some of the female roles.)

Note

With a company of only fifteen players, the actors would have been obliged to take the parts of soldiers (and possibly the dead father and son in II. 5). This would have placed even greater demands upon the actors and would have required many quick changes of costume between scenes, but would not have been impossible. A company of twenty players would have been able to cope with the play's casting demands more easily, however, possibly increasing the likelihood that Pembroke's Men hired extra men while on tour or brought 'supernumeraries' from London to take up minor roles (such as soldiers).

Appendix iv

English Provincial Schools used as Playing Places in the early modern period

Direct evidence identifies a number of regional schools as playing venues. The indirect evidence of school statutes calling for play performances in school and orders regulating the use of some schools as theatrical venues identifies several other schools as probable playing places. Those schools identified as hosting plays indirectly are shown in brackets. Pupils from many other schools were dramatically active, but schools have only been listed if there is evidence that the pupils performed within their school. Where possible the specific location used for performance(s) is given. Those schools which are known to survive to the present are identified with *. Schools which only survive in part or which have been substantially altered are identified with **. ¹

<u>School</u>	<u>Name of School</u>	<u>Place of performance(s)</u>
[Boston] (Lincolnshire)** ²	Grammar School	[School house]
Bristol (Avon)** ³	Free School of St Bartholomew	'in' the school
[Coventry](Warwickshire)** ⁴	Free Grammar School	
Crediton (Devon)** ⁵	Queen Elizabeth Grammar School	'in ye Schoule'
Corfe Castle (Dorset) ⁶	Grammar School	
Eton (Buckinghamshire)* ⁷	Grammar School	The Hall
Hadleigh (Suffolk) ⁸	Free School	
Hitchin (Hertfordshire)** ⁹		
Lyme Regis (Dorset) ¹⁰		
Maldon (Essex) ¹¹	Grammar School	'in the grammar schole'
[Newark] (Nottinghamshire)* ¹²		
[Sandwich] (Kent) ¹³		
[Shrewsbury] (Shropshire)** ¹⁴		
Winchester (Hampshire)* ¹⁵		Hall
Westminster (Westminster)* ¹⁶		Hall, Dean's House

¹ Schools inside London and its immediate suburbs, such as St Paul's Grammar School, Merchant Taylors' School and Charterhouse, are treated as metropolitan schools in the period and therefore not included in the list. Westminster School is listed, however, as Westminster was a community distinct from central London in the late sixteenth century.

² On 20 March, 1578 the local council agreed 'that there shall be no mo plays nor interludes [...] in the church nor in the Chauncell nor in the hall nor Scolle howse. ['Records of Plays and Players in Lincolnshire, 1300-1585', ed. by Stanley J. Kahrl, Malone Society: Collections, VIII (Oxford: Oxford University, 1969 [1974]), p. 5.] The phrasing of the order suggests that each of the listed places (including the School House) had been used for plays in the past.

The original school house survives to the present, 'but is now the School Library' at Boston Grammar School. [The school as a whole remained virtually unchanged until 1850 when it was extended with the addition of another classroom at the north end of the original school. Another room was added at the other end in 1856.] The stone building consists of one large hall and has an arched roof. A central fireplace was added in the 1730s and gas lighting was installed in the early part of this century. [This information was kindly supplied by L. J. Rich, Bursar at the school.] The school house was built in the Hallgarth and had a large yard. (This also partly survives.) The yard may have been available as an alternative playing venue once performances within the school were prohibited.

³ Direct evidence of performances at the school is found in the town's civic records. In 1577-8, for example, forty shillings was 'allowed to mr Dunne Scholemaster [...] toward his charges of his last playes that he had in the Barthilmews the last Christmas'. [REED: Bristol, ed. by Mark C. Pilkinton (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1997), p. 117.]

As Pilkinton reports: 'Founded by 1243 as St Bartholomew's Hospital, the free school of St Bartholomew was established over Frome gate in 1532 by Robert Thorne, a Bristol Merchant. The free school (later Bristol Grammar School) moved between 1536-1540 to larger quarters at the bottom of Christmas steps'. [Mark C. Pilkinton, 'Entertainment and the free school of St Bartholomew, Bristol', *REED: Newsletter*, 13:2 (1988), 9-13 (p. 12).] The school building does not survive to the present but the archway leading into the old building and some of the walls and foundations are preserved (see plate 18a). Excavations have revealed that the school probably possessed a yard which might also have been used for play performances.

⁴ There may be a reference to a performance at the school in 1617 in the Council's records:

'Paid the 19th of Iune Anno domini 1622 to Iohn Rogerson and Iohn Baker late wardens which they paid to the Schoole Masters of the ffree Schoole the last yere both at the visitacion xls. and at the Comedy xxs.' [*REED: Coventry*, ed. by R. W. Ingram (London: Manchester University; Toronto, Buffalo: Toronto University, 1981), p. 415.] Ingram assumes that the Comedy was staged at the school. However, although the school may be the most likely venue, we cannot be absolutely certain that this was not a performance given elsewhere (e.g. at the mayor's house).

The school building, which survives to the present, was converted from the remains of the hospital of St John, after the Dissolution of the Monasteries. The property passed to John Hales and the hospital's fourteenth century chapel was converted into a grammar school. The chapel afforded a large hall space which functioned as the main school room. According to a survey of the building in 1906 the hall measured c. 78 feet by 22 feet 6 in. However, the hall was originally longer, the building having been shortened to make room for a neighbouring road. [Information kindly provided by David Urquart, Vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Coventry.] (See plates 20 & 21) This hall would have provided a large performance space, and seating would have been readily available for spectators, as the hall is equipped with pews. The pews were apparently in the chapel when it was a school and were used by the school's sixteenth and early seventeenth century pupils. At present the school building (which is owned by Holy Trinity Church, Coventry) is not used or open to the public, as it is in a state of disrepair. However, the church hopes to restore the building in the near future.

⁵ In 1581-2 a payment is recorded in Crediton Corporation's Warden's Accounts 'for beardes and other thinges occupied by ye schollers in playeng of theyr Tragedes & Commodies in ye Schoule this yere'. [*REED: Devon*, ed. by John M. Wasson (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1986), p. 62.]

The free school of Crediton was established in the church at Crediton by letters patent of King Edward VI in 1547, replacing the Ecclesiastical College which had used the church property until its dissolution in 1546. [Robert Bovett's, *Historical Notes on Devon Schools* (Exeter: Devon County Council, 1989), p. 401.] Queen Elizabeth 'in 1560 confirmed the letters patent of King Edward VI and granted to the 12 Governors [of the school] the great tithes which had lately been the possessions of the late College of Crediton'. [Bovett, p. 401.] In 1572 the 'Lady Chapel was partitioned off from the rest of the Church, and adapted as the schoolroom for the Grammar School'. [Bovett, p. 402.] It is therefore likely that the performance 'in ye Schoule' in 1581-2 was mounted in the chapel. The school was moved from the chapel to a new building at the west end of the town in 1860. [Bovett, p. 402.] However, the chapel survives as the Lady Chapel of Holy Cross Church, Crediton: 'It is a plain room with five later (Perpendicular) windows.' A reminder of its use as a school is afforded by 'the c16 door in the s. wall, now blocked - and restored in' the 1870s by Hayward.' [*The Buildings of England: Devon*, ed. by Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 295.]

⁶ Evidence of plays being performed in the school at Corfe is found in the autobiography of Robert Ashley (BL: Sloane MS. 2131 ff 16v-17). The account is in Latin. Translated the relevant section reads: 'But since the custody of Corfe Castle in the Isle of Purbeck- which lies next to the territory of Dorset- had been entrusted at that time to (my) father by Sir Christopher Hatton, Queen Elizabeth's vice-chamberlain, I moved there with (my) family, where the headmaster of the grammar school had earned a good reputation for himself. When I was entrusted to his care, I easily became the head boy of that school [...]. There too we put on comedies during the Christmas celebrations the principal parts, which had previously been given to another boy, were after assigned to me by the master, with which glorious (opportunity) I was, perhaps, too pleased.' [Translated in *REED: Dorset/ Cornwall*, ed. by Rosalind Conklin Hays and C. E. McGee, Sally L. Joyce and Evelyn S. Newlyn (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1999), p. 317.] Internal evidence indicates that 'the Christmas performance [...] was probably

in 1574-5.' [Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 339.]

⁷ There are many references to plays being staged in the school hall (e.g. in 1572-3 nine pence was spent upon candles 'at the playes in the halle'). [REED: *Buckinghamshire*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston, forthcoming.] The School and the hall where plays were performed (measuring 82 feet by 32 feet) survive to the present (see plate 22). [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Buckinghamshire*, ed. by William Page (London: Constable, 1908), p. 163.] The hall has been altered in some ways since the late sixteenth century. 'It was remodelled in the 1720s and again in 1858, when a screen and gallery were erected and the roof renewed. This restoration also revealed three original fireplaces which had been covered by panelling.' [Information kindly supplied by P. Hatfield, College Archivist, Eton College in a private communication, 23 June, 1999.]

⁸ The title-page of *Apollo Shroving* records that the play was written by its author (William Hawkins) for 'the Schollars of the Free-Schoole of Hadleigh [...]. And acted by them on *Shrouetuesday*, being the sixt of *February*, 1626.' [William Hawkins, *Apollo Shroving*, ed. by Howard Garret Rhoads (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1936), p. 90.] The play includes allusions to its performance in the school (e.g. 'Our Schoole imagine heere new built and dight' - *Apollo Shroving*, Prologue. 61). The play also apparently alludes to a previous play performance at the school: 'Wee acted *Comicke Terence his Eunuchus*' (*Apollo Shroving*, Prologue. 29). This may have been staged the previous year in the school.

Hadleigh Grammar School in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century occupied part of the complex of Guildhall buildings. The central part of the Guildhall (the Market House) was enlarged 'between 1460 and 1470 [...] by the addition of [...] two wings to east and west facing the churchyard together with a long building stretching south from the middle of the Market House'. The school occupied the west wing. The building is no longer extant. 'It was so badly damaged by a storm in 1884 that it had to be demolished'. ['The Guildhall, Hadleigh' (Hadleigh: Hadleigh Market Feoffment Charity, 1981), p. 2. A leaflet provided by Sue Andrews, Joint Archivist, Hadleigh Archive.]

⁹ In the 1550s John Bale visited Ralph Radcliffe at the school which he had established in the dissolved Carmelite priory at Hitchin. He described how Radcliffe had converted part of the School into a theatre in which his pupils performed plays: 'Potissimum vero theatrum, quod in inferiori aedium parte longe pulcherrimum extruit.' [Harold Newcomb Hillebrand, *The Child Actors: A Chapter in Elizabethan Stage History* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), pp. 18-9.]

Only a fragment of the Priory (and one-time school) survive. Part of the 'North or Frater range and part of the W. range' are all that remain visible. 'The rest of the present house, which encloses a small courtyard is of plastered brick, built in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The S. wing is perhaps on the site of the church; it was completely rebuilt in the eighteenth century, and contains the principal rooms. The E. wing, possibly on the site of the Dorter range and Chapter house, contains a few rooms, the main staircase, and some cellars on the ground level; the domestic offices are in the W. wing. The N. Wing contains some cellars and a loggia on the ground floor, which represents the cellarge under the Frater, and the N. Walk of the cloister [...]. The space occupied by the Frater on the first floor of this wing is now divided into several bedrooms.' [*The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments in England: An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Hertfordshire* (London: HMSO, 1910), p. 119.] It is not possible to discover the dimensions of the theatre created by Radcliffe.

¹⁰ The school house at Lyme Regis was used by players in 1606-7, the local churchwardens presenting the Mayor 'ffor giving leaue vnto Certaine Enterlude players to playe in a scoole howse adioyninge vnto the church being within the compasse of the church yerd'. [Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 218]. The school at Lyme Regis no longer survives, but as the description given reveals, the building stood within the churchyard. [Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 39.] This may mean that it was not of large proportions.

¹¹ In 1623 a payment was made in the Maldon town accounts for 'wine and sugar given to Mr. Daynes and other gentlemen when his scholars did last act a comedy in the grammar schole'. [A. Clark, 'Maldon Records and the Drama', *Notes and Queries*, 10th series, 8 (1907), 43-4 (p. 44).] As well as providing clear evidence for a specific performance the phrasing of this entry implies that there had been other play performances at the school. The school in which the performances took place was apparently endowed under the will of 'Ralph Breder, alderman of Maldon' in 1609. He bequeathed '£300 to five trustees to buy lands, the income to be paid towards the maintenance of a schoolmaster to

teach a grammar school in Maldon.' [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Essex*, II, ed. by William Page and J. Horace Round (London: Constable, 1907), p. 516.] The schoolmaster whose scholars performed in 1623 was already employed at the school in 1621: 'At a borough court of Petitioners, 3 December 1621, the bailiffs and aldermen ordered that "Mr John Daynes, scolemr. of the Grammar Schole... and the succeeding Scholemasters from Christmas thenceforth, shall take yerely for teaching and instructing of the son of any townsman or inhabitant, being a Freeman and able and fit to pay, 20 s. by the yere and not above".' [Page and Horace Round, *Essex*, II, p. 516.] The school (which does not survive) appears to have been 'kept in St. Peter's Church'. The body of the Church 'fell down about 1662.' [Page and Horace Round, *Essex*, II, p. 517.]

- ¹² In 1568-9 the corporation at Newark ordered that 'no players from hensf[o]rth shall playe in the scole house but onelie suche as shalb[e] permitted & licensed there to playe' by the alderman. [Nottingham, Nottinghamshire Archive, Newark Corporation Minutes, 1550-1636, Memoranda, fol. 45. Transcribed from a copy of fol. 45 kept at the REED office, Toronto.] The phrasing of the order implies that players had performed in the school house before. It also anticipates future performances at the school.

The school which was established in 1529 as the free Grammar School survives to the present, although it is no longer used as a school. Today, the building is known as 'Tudor Hall' and houses part of the Newark Museum (see plate 19). Any performances in the school are likely to have been staged inside in the stone hall. A 'timber-framed room' partly overhangs 'the large hall'. [*The Buildings of England: Nottinghamshire*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner, revised by Elizabeth Williamson (London: Penguin, 1951; repr. 1965), p. 194.]

- ¹³ According to Motter one of Sir Roger Manwood's 1580 statutes for the Free Grammar School of Sandwich provided that 'at everie Christmas time, if the Master doe think mete, to have one Comedie or Tragedie of chaste matter in Latin to be played, the partes to be divided to as many schollars as may be, and to be learned at vacant times.' [Cited in T. H. Vail Motter, *The School Drama in England* (London: Longmans, 1929), p. 226.] This suggests that plays are likely to have been staged at the school. The sixteenth century school is no longer extant. The school was 'rebuilt in 1894-5 by Sir T. G. Jackson.' [*The Buildings of England: N East and East Kent*, ed. by John Newman, 3rd edn (London: Penguin, 1969; repr. 1983), p. 450.]
- ¹⁴ The School Ordinances introduced at Shrewsbury Free Grammar School in 1577-8 made play performance a statutory part of pupils' education in the highest form: 'euery Thursday the schollars of the highest forme before they go to play shall for exercise declame and play oon acte of a comedy.' [*REED: Shropshire*, ed. by J. Alan B. Somerset, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1994), I, p. 225.] Shrewsbury School survives to the present but was rebuilt in 1627-30. The school rooms likely to have been used for the play performances are therefore no longer extant.
- ¹⁵ There are many records relating to play performances at Winchester School by the pupils (e.g. in 1573-4 payment was made 'p[ro] div[er]sis expe[n]s[is] circa scaffolda[m] erige[n]d[am] et depone[n]d[am] et p[ro] domu[n]culis de novo co[m]posit[is] cu[m] cariag[i]o et recariag[i]o ly ioyst[es] et alioru[m] mutuat[orum] ad ea[n]de[m] scaffold[am] cu[m] vij ly linck[es] et [...] ca[n]delaru[m] p[ro] lumine expe[n]s[is] 3bus noctib[us] in ludis comediar[um] et tragediaru[m]'). [Jane Cowling, 'An Edition of the Records of Drama, Ceremony and Secular Music in Winchester City and College, 1556-1642' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Southampton, 1993), p. 63.] There is also some evidence of a professional performance at the college, a payment of five shillings to the Queen's players being recorded in 1568-9. [Cowling, p. 62.] Most of the play performances at the school are likely to have been staged in the large dining hall. This survives in the present School. The hall is found on the upper floor of the south range of the school, above 'the original school-room'. The hall is 63 feet in length and is lit by 'large two-light windows with a transom'. [*The Buildings of England: Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner and David Lloyd (London: Penguin, 1967), p. 699, p. 702.]
- ¹⁶ Annual play performances were required at Westminster by statute in the Elizabethan period. [See Motter, p. 86.] The school hall in which the performances appear to have been staged is extant and, according to the present College archivist, 'it is substantially unchanged since' the sixteenth century 'other than changes in heating arrangements and for the accommodation of greater numbers' (see plate 23) [E. A. Smith, Archivist, Westminster College, in a private communication, 19th July, 1999.]

Appendix vUniversity Colleges recorded as hosting play performances, 1559-1625

Only colleges explicitly recorded as venues for play performances are included in the following list. The list is based upon the dramatic records of the two universities as transcribed for the REED project. [*REED: Cambridge*, ed. by Alan H. Nelson, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1989); *REED: Oxford University*, ed. by John R. Elliott Jr, forthcoming.] Where possible the location of performances is identified. Those spaces used for play performances which survive are marked *. Those spaces which survive only in part or which have been substantially altered are marked **. Cambridge Colleges are listed in part I, and Oxford Colleges in part II.

I

Name of CollegeSpace(s) used for performance(s)

Christ's

Hall **¹

Clare

Corpus Christi

Gonville and Caius

Hall **²

Jesus

Hall **³Chapel **⁴

King's

Hall

Chapel *⁵

Pembroke's

Peterhouse

Hall **⁶

Queens'

Hall **⁷

St John's

Hall **⁸

Trinity

Hall *⁹

II

Name of CollegeSpace(s) used for performance(s)

All Soul's

Christ Church

Hall *¹⁰

Corpus Christi

Exeter

Hall

Magdalen

President's House **¹¹

Merton

Hall **¹²Warden's House **¹³

Queens'

Hall¹⁴

St John's

Hall **¹⁵President's Lodge**(?)¹⁶

Trinity

President's Lodge**(?)¹⁷

¹ The sixteenth century college hall does not survive to the present unaltered. It was 'entirely rebuilt by G. G. Scott between 1876 and 1879.' However, 'the old materials were used and the same plan was followed but with the addition of an east oriel'. The present hall (measuring 54 feet by 26 feet) is therefore unlikely to differ greatly in size from the original sixteenth century hall, although it is higher (see plate 25). During the rebuilding 'the height of the walls was increased by six feet'. The original screen was retained 'but much restored'. [*The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments: An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of Cambridge*, I (London: HMSO, 1959), p. 32.]

George Gilbert Scott described the screen when he surveyed the hall in 1875: 'The screen of the Hall is a mere casing of deal, within which remains the original screen. This is of oak and of elegant design, though simple.' [Cited in *The Architectural History of the University of Cambridge*, ed. by Robert Willis and John Willis Clark, 4 vols (Cambridge; Cambridge University, 1886; repr. 1988), II, p. 221.]

- ² The first-floor of the West Range of Gonville Court which houses the sixteenth century Hall survives but the space is no longer used as the college Hall, a new Hall having been built in 1853 by Salvin. [RCHM: *Cambridge*, I, p. 77.] The old Hall has also been altered several times since the Elizabethan and Jacobean period. In 1792, for example, it was 'remodelled by Soane who inserted a plaster segmental barrel-vault'; and in the 1850s the Hall was converted into 'sets of rooms'. [RCHM: *Cambridge*, I, p. 77.] However, in 1910 'the old Hall was again cleared and made into a Reading Room annexed to the new Library, with kitchen offices below'. According to the Royal Commission's report, 'the old Hall (now 23 1/2 feet by 46 1/2 feet) [...] retains much of the original roof although reconditioned and incorporating much modern material', and is of five bays. [RCHM: *Cambridge*, I, p. 77.]
- ³ The Hall at Jesus survives but has been altered since the Elizabethan and Jacobean period. The present Hall measures 64 feet by 25 feet and 'is of six bays with windows in each bay in the N. and S. walls. The oriel-window at the E. end of the N. Wall, of c. 1500, is three-sided, with two cinque-foiled and transomed lights in a four-centred head on the face and one on each canted side.' [RCHM: *Cambridge*, I, p. 93.] The present screen dates from 1703, having replaced an earlier screen 'made by Woodrooffe in 1610-11,' when the Hall was repaired. [RCHM: *Cambridge*, I, p. 92.] In 1875 the Hall was changed more substantially. The renovations included raising 'the floor of the Hall [...] almost 1 ft.' and moving the screen 'westwards to the present position [...] thus adding some 13 1/2 feet to the total length of the room'. [RCHM: *Cambridge*, I, p. 92.]
- ⁴ The chapel survives but has been remodelled several times since the sixteenth century. Between 1788-90 the choir and crossing of the chapel 'were given plaster ceilings, the chancel arch [was] filled in, and the inner chapel this formed fitted with painted deal seats'. [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely*, III, ed. by J. P. C. Roach (London: Oxford University, 1959), p. 426.] (See plate 27) Further restorations were undertaken in 1844. In this instance, 'the partition in the chancel arch was removed, an organ chamber built on the north side of the choir, new stalls and a new floor of encaustic tiles supplied for the chancel.' [Roach, *Cambridge*, III, p. 427.] The dimensions of the chapel remain essentially the same, however. The thirteenth century chancel measures 64 feet by 23 1/4 feet, while the nave, comprising 'two and a half bays of the seven bays of the nave of c. 1200 of the priory church', measures 33 3/4 feet by 24 feet.' [RCHM: *Cambridge*, I, p. 86, p. 88.] The chapel at Jesus would have afforded a large performance space, the chancel alone being of similar dimensions to the college hall, making it less surprising that the scholars should have used the chapel, rather than the Hall for some performances.
- ⁵ The Chapel, finished sometime in the 1530s, is the largest college chapel in Cambridge. The Chapel and ante-chapel measure 289 feet by 76 1/2 feet. [RCHM: *Cambridge*, I, p. 105.]
- ⁶ The Hall (measuring 55 3/4 feet by 25 1/4 feet) 'was built c. 1290 and appears to have been originally a rubble building of five bays, including the Buttery [...]. About the middle of the fifteenth century the windows, at least on the south side, were replaced by taller ones and the Hall appears to have been considerably heightened [...]. The N. Wall was refaced in 1755 and in 1870 the whole building was restored by Gilbert Scott.' [*Royal Commission on Historical Monuments: An Inventory of Historical Monuments in the City of Cambridge*, II (London: HMSO, 1959), p. 160.]
- ⁷ As Nelson reports, 'the hall in which the plays were staged survives intact, although a thoroughgoing redecoration in 1732-3 has changed its superficial appearance considerably'. [Alan H. Nelson, ed., *REED: Cambridge*, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1989), II, p. 766.]
- ⁸ The hall at St John's also survives, although 'the wall at the dais end was pushed back in the 1860s, making the hall half again as long'. [Nelson, II, p. 770.] Prior to its extension the hall 'was about 70 feet long and 30 feet wide including the screens'. [Willis and Willis Clark, II, p. 308.] A screen was in place by 1538 as in that year six shillings was paid for 'mending ye screne'. Willis and Willis Clark describe the screen and its alteration: 'A screen with two doorways separates the passage between the courts from the body of the Hall. This screen, which had no doors in its original state, has been altered by the addition of modern doors with fan-lights over them and a regular entablature with a cornice.' [Willis and Willis Clark, II, p. 310.]

⁹ During his mastership Thomas Nevile (1593-1615) rebuilt several parts of Trinity College, including the hall. Nevile's hall survives to the present (see plate 28). The rebuilding of the hall began in 1604-5. It 'replaced the old hall of Michaelhouse, the space of which was now used for the kitchen and offices of the new hall. The screen passage seems to have remained in the same position, though this was now south instead of north of the hall. The two doorways into the passage, though differing in shape and details, are both clearly a good deal older than Nevile's time.' [*The Buildings of England: Cambridgeshire*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner, 3rd edn (London: Penguin, 1954; repr. 1977), p. 170.] As Pevsner notes, 'the hall is the largest in Cambridge, of exactly the same size as that of the Middle Temple, that is 103 by 40 feet by 50 feet high'. [Pevsner, *Cambridgeshire*, p. 170.]

¹⁰ The hall at Christ Church (measuring approximately 115 feet by 40 feet) 'remains remarkably intact'. [Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998), p. 78.] The hall, built by Wolsey, was finished in 1529 and has 'a lofty hammerbeam roof and eight bays lit by large windows on the upper level above walls panelled in the nineteenth century.' [McMillin and MacLean, p. 78.] (See plate 26)

¹¹ The President's Lodging, 'formerly enclosing a quadrangle with the Election Chamber on the N. side, was rebuilt in 1886-8 except for the one-storied kitchen-wing extending to the N.' [*Royal Commission on Historical Monuments: An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of Oxford* (London: HMSO, 1939), p. 76.]

¹² Merton's original hall is thought to have stood 'where it still stands', and the present building may incorporate parts of the original hall. During the sixteenth century the only alteration to the hall was the 'addition of an entrance porch in 1579'. However, in 1794 the hall was reconstructed by 'James Wyatt [...], and further "restored" (by Scott) in 1874, in the fever of Gothic revival. [...] How much of the original building survives this double-reconstruction it would be difficult to say- perhaps not much more than the east and west walls.' [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Oxfordshire*, III, ed. by H. E. Salter and Mary D. Lobel (London: Oxford University, 1954), p. 99.] The present hall measures 78 feet by 27 feet. [*RCHM: Oxford*, p. 77.]

¹³ The east end of the Gatehouse range is thought to have been 'part of the Warden's Lodging built in 1299-1300.' [*RCHM: Oxford*, p. 77.] In 1282 'the Merton records speak of an *Aula custodis* (Rec. 3614), called in a slightly later document, (1285, Rec. 4052) *parva Aula* in contrast to the great hall of the college'. [Salter and Lobel, III, p. 98.] It consisted 'of a small hall (28 1/2 feet by 21 feet) with a cross-wing at the E. End; the latter has been largely rebuilt but the form of the original window in the N. gable-wall has been retained. The small hall is now of two, but was originally of one storey; all the dressings have been renewed but the doorway and two windows in the s. wall appear to retain their original form.' [*RCHM: Oxford*, p. 77.] Presumably, the play performances in the Warden's lodgings were mounted in this hall.

¹⁴ The hall, and the other Medieval college buildings, were demolished 'when the college was rebuilt on a larger scale between the years 1672 and 1760'. [*RCHM: Oxford*, p. 97.]

¹⁵ St John's College was created from the earlier monastic college of St Bernard's. With the dissolution of the monasteries, St Bernard's was dissolved 'although it remained an academic hall, which was granted to Christ Church in 1546.' [Anon., 'Some notes on the early history of the buildings of St John's College (Oxford)', no date, p. 1, provided by Mrs B Silcock, the President's Secretary, St John's College.] In 1555 Sir Thomas White, a wealthy London Merchant 'founded St John's College', acquiring the buildings of St Bernard's from Christ Church for the new college. He modified the buildings 'extensively'. This included transforming 'the 42 foot kitchen' in the north range 'into a hall'. ['Some notes', p. 1.] The hall was further enlarged and wainscoted in 1616.

Since this time the hall has been remodelled in various ways. 'The hall was considerably altered in the course of the eighteenth century. The ceiling in its present form dates from 1730, and in the following year the marble chimneypiece [...] was erected by William Townsend. The screen of 1616 was replaced in 1742 by the existing stone screen, designed by James Gibbs [...]. The wainscoting was introduced in 1744. It was probably at this time that the windows were deprived of their transoms and mullions, shown in Williams's *Oxonia Depicta* of 1732-3. No further change took place until 1936, when the screen was set back in order to increase the accommodation in the hall.' [Salter and Lobel, III, pp. 262-3.]

¹⁶ How much of the space used as the President's lodgings in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth

centuries survives is not clear, as new lodgings were provided for the President when the Canterbury Quadrangle was built (1631-36). When the College was first founded, the unfinished east range of the old St Bernard's College was completed, 'the northern half' as 'lodgings for the president on both floors'. ['Some notes', p. 1.] The recorded performances occurred somewhere in this lodging. The Lodge may have included a hall which could be used as at Merton.

- ¹⁷ The early location of the warden or president's lodgings appears to have been in the north side of the first college quadrangle: 'The north side of the quadrangle [...] must have been built between 1409 and 1414; at the west end of it was the parlour on the ground floor and the warden's chamber above it'. Later the eastern range of the quadrangle was taken over as the President's lodgings. [Salter and Lobel, III, p. 239.] In 1687 'under Ralph Bathurst' the lodging was 'remodelled and two staircases added on the East face.' [*RCHM: Oxford*, p. 110.] This part of the college continued to be the President's lodge until 1885-7 when a new President's house was built and the old lodgings 'and the "cottages" (and late on Kettell Hall) were [...] converted into twenty sets of rooms.' [Salter and Lobel, III, p. 242.] The space in which George Gascoigne's *Supposes* was performed therefore cannot be seen today. However, it is likely that the performance was given in a large parlour or hall incorporated in the President's lodge.

Appendix vi

A list of Country Houses and Castles recorded as playing venues in early modern provincial England, 1559-1625

The following table lists large Country houses (or Castles) explicitly recorded as hosting performances of plays in the early modern English provinces. Country Houses which hosted masque performances, or pageants and dialogues only (e.g. as progress entertainments) are not included. Likewise, houses (or castles) which are only recorded as hosting entertainment given by ‘game players’ (e.g. Brome Hall, Suffolk) are not listed as we cannot be certain that the players were dramatic performers. Performances in royal palaces (used as royal residences) and play productions in small provincial town and rural houses are not included either. Where possible I have identified whether the houses are extant today. Any houses which survive little changed since the early seventeenth century are marked *. Those houses which survive but which have been altered or renovated substantially are marked **.

<u>Name or place of house</u>	<u>Family /Resident</u>	<u>Performance Space</u> <u>(if recorded)</u>
Ashby-de-la-Zouche Castle (Leic.s.)** ¹	Hastings	
Belvoir Castle (Leic.s) ²	Manners	
Bishop Grindal’s Palace, Putney (Surr.)		
Brandsby Hall (York.s) ³	Chomeley	
Burley-on-the-Hill (Rutland) ⁴	Harington	
Boarzell House (Suss.) ⁵	Roberts	
Caludon Castle (Warw.s.) ⁶	Berkeley	
Castle Rushen (Isle of Man) ** ⁷	Stanley	
Chatsworth (Derbys.) ** ⁸	Cavendish	
Croydon Palace (Surrey) ** ⁹	Archbishop of Canterbury	Hall
Dunkenhagh (Lanc.s) ** ¹⁰	Walmesley	
Duke of Norfolk’s Palace (Norwich) ¹¹	Howard	
Drax (Yorks.) ¹²	Constable	
Flixton Hall (Suff.) ¹³	Tasburgh	
Gawthorpe Hall (Lanc.s) ** ¹⁴	Shuttleworth	
Golden (Cornwall) ** ¹⁵	Tregian	
Gowthwaite Hall (Yorks.) ¹⁶	Yorke	Hall
Grimsthorpe Castle (Linc.s) ** ¹⁷	Bertie	
Haddon Hall (Derbys.) * ¹⁸	Vernon	
Hardwick New Hall (Derbys.) *	Cavendish	[Great Chamber?]
Hazelwood Castle (Yorks.) ** ¹⁹	Clifford	
Hengrave Hall (Suff.) ** ²⁰	Kytson	
Ingatstone Hall (Ess.) ** ²¹	Petre	
Kendal (Westmorl.) ** ²²	Crown/ uninhabited (Part of the property was held by Kendal corporation)	
Kenninghall (Norf.) ** ²³	Howard	
Kenilworth Castle (Warw.s) ** ²⁴	Dudley	
Keswick (Cumb.)	Augsburg Miners	
Kirtling (Camb.s) ** ²⁵	North	
Knowsley House (Lanc.s) ** ²⁶	Stanley	

Lathom House (Lanc.s) ²⁷	Stanley	Hall
Londesborough (Yorks.) ²⁸	Clifford	
Longleat (Wilts.)** ²⁹	Thynne	
Ludlow (Shrops.)** ³⁰	Crown/ Lord	
	President of the	
	Council of the Marches	
	Crown/ Various ³²	
Mortlake House (Surr.) ³¹	Howard	
Naworth Castle (Cumb.) ** ³³	Stanley	
New Park (Lanc.s) ³⁴	Sidney	
Penshurst (Kent) ** ³⁵	Cholmley	
Roxby Hall (Yorks.)	Clifford	
Skipton Castle (Yorks.) ** ³⁶	Shuttleworth	
Smithills Hall (Lanc.s) ** ³⁷	Shireburn	
Stoneyhurst (Lanc.s) ** ³⁸	Francis	
Ticknall Hall (Derbys.)	Puckering	
Warwick Priory (Warw.s.) ³⁹	Sherrington	
Wardley (Lanc.s)** ⁴⁰	Godfrey	
?Winchelsea (Suss.) ⁴¹	Manners	
Winkburn (Notts.) ⁴²	Willoughby	
Wollaton Hall (Notts.) ** ⁴³	Crown/ Lee	
Woodstock Manor (Oxon.) ⁴⁴	Curwen	
Workington Hall (Cumb.) ** ⁴⁵		

¹ The castle was owned in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period by the Hastings family. It had passed into the family's possession in the fifteenth century (1464). The first family owner, William, Lord Hastings added to the existing twelfth century building. [*The Buildings of England: Leicestershire and Rutland*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner (London: Penguin, 1960; repr. 1970), p. 80.] It survives to the present but parts of the castle have been lost and others are decayed.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the castle 'consisted of a N and S courtyard. The gatehouse must have been on the N side of the N courtyard [...], separated by the hall range from the S courtyard, with the garden to its S. The two surviving brick towers mark the S boundary of the castle area. Standing in the courtyard one has Lord Hastings's remaining tower on the S, and his other buildings on the E, and the older hall range on the N.' [Pevsner, *Leicestershire*, pp. 80-1.] The castle was 'slighted in 1648' and 'much more was [...] still in existence in 1730, [...] than there is today; the hall roof survived until then, its gables until 1770.' [Pevsner, *Leicestershire*, p. 80.]

² The Castle built by 1555 was 'demolished by the consent of the eighth earl (a Parliamentarian) in 1649.' [Pevsner, *Leicestershire*, p. 96.]

³ The Jacobean Hall was replaced by a new house 'built by Francis Cholmeley' on the same site 'in 1767 from designs by Thomas Atkinson of York.' [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Yorkshire, North Riding*, II, ed. by William Page (London: St Catherine Press, 1923), p. 104.]

⁴ George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham 'bought the estate from the Haringtons of Exton' in the Jacobean period, and built a new house. This house was later replaced by the present house. [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Rutland*, II, ed. by William Page (London: St Catherine Press, 1935), p. 113.]

⁵ Boarzell House, in the village of Ticehurst was in the possession of the Roberts family in the Elizabethan period, and does not survive to the present (see plate 35a for an illustration of the house). 'The Roberts' alienated the property in 1859, when their ancient mansion was demolished.' The site of

the house 'is marked by the remains of a moat.' [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Sussex*, IX, ed. by L. F. Salzman (London: Oxford University, 1937), p. 254.]

⁶ As Geoffrey Tyack reports, there was a house on the site 'in the twelfth century, and it was rebuilt by John Segrave in 1305 and fortified in 1354, a year after it had passed by marriage to Lord Mowbray'. [Geoffrey Tyack, *Warwickshire Country Houses* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1994), p. 235.] In 1580-1 'there was a major rebuilding by his great-nephew Henry, 7th Lord Berkeley (d. 1613), who used the house as a hunting lodge and later as his main residence. According to a seventeenth century account by John Smyth "the roofs of divers of the houses of those old castle buildings [were] taken down and soe far altered that the whole might be said to have been moulded and made new".' [Tyack, p. 235.] In the later seventeenth century the house was abandoned and became dilapidated. The property was sold piecemeal in 1815. Today the site of the castle is covered with housing. [Tyack, p. 235.] Only a small fragment of the castle's walls remains standing.

⁷ The Castle on the Isle of Man is extant but has been altered since the sixteenth century. It is 'the principal Castle on the island and [is] an almost total rebuilding by the fourteenth-century Montacute earls of Salisbury, Lords of Man. [...] The upper floors of the keep are important mid-fourteenth century residential work. An external stone stair led to the first-floor hall, a dark antechamber (now an 1827 staircase), and withdrawing chamber, supported by three subsidiary rooms in towers breaking from the three outer faces. That opposite the hall entrance was the kitchen. [...] The second floor, reached from stairs at the lower end of the hall, followed a similar plan, with an upper hall with fireplace, withdrawing chamber, and strong room, and three subsidiary private rooms.' [*Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales, 1300-1500, I: Northern England*, ed. by Anthony Emery (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996), p. 192.]

By the sixteenth century, the Isle of Man estate had passed into the possession of the Stanley family, although in 1594, 'with England facing the threat of invasion from Spain, Elizabeth I seized the opportunity to take the island into the custody of the English crown. [...] It was returned to the Stanleys by private act of parliament in 1610.' [Roger Dickinson in *REED: Lancashire*, ed. by David George (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1991), p. 267.] The performance by 'my Lord vause's players' in 1602-3 might have been given in either the upper or lower hall. [George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. 270.]

⁸ The Elizabethan Chatsworth House was begun in 1552 'by Sir William Cavendish and his wife Bess of Hardwick. The first of her many houses, it was a square built around an inner courtyard, just like its successor, and had four storeys, square angle turrets, and a tall gatehouse, on the W wing triangularly projecting turrets. Nothing externally visible survives of this house.' (The only parts of the original property which appear to survive are the 'Hunting Tower' and 'Queen Mary's Bower'.) [*The Buildings of England: Derbyshire*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner, revised by Elizabeth Williamson, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 1953; repr. 1978), p. 127.] The first phase of work upon the present house began in 1687. The work included removing much of the original house, including, in 1689-91, the Hall where the plays performed at the house may have been staged. [Pevsner, *Derbyshire*, p. 130.]

⁹ The Archbishop's Palace does not survive to the present wholly intact: 'After the Archbishops sold the palace in 1780 [...] the buildings fell into decay, and parts were demolished.' [*The Buildings of England: London, II (South)*, ed. by Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner, 4 vols (London: Penguin, 1983), p. 212.] The surviving palace 'consists of an irregular group of buildings around two small enclosed courtyards, with the hall projecting to the E. They are mostly of the C14 to C15, with later modifications, incorporating an early core, perhaps of the late C12, between the two courtyards.' [Pevsner, *London, II*, p. 212.]

The Great Hall, in which Nashe's, *Summer's Last Will and Testament* may have been performed, is preserved. The hall was 'probably by Archbishop Courtney, c. 1381-96, and remodelled by Archbishop Stafford c. 1443-52.' It measures 56 feet by 38 feet and is fitted with a dais. [Pevsner, *London, II*, pp. 212-3.]

¹⁰ Dunkenhalgh Hall is extant, but little of the early modern house survives. The present building is 'mostly of c. 1815-20.' [*The Buildings of England: North Lancashire*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner (London: Penguin, 1969), p. 102.]

¹¹ The Palace no longer survives. 'Most of the palace was pulled down in 1711, and what was left disappeared in the late 1960s to make way for a multi-storey car park.' [David Galloway, *REED: Norwich* (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1984), p. lxxxv.]

Like the Duke's house at Kenninghall, the Duke of Norfolk's palace in Norwich was a grand house. Williams speaks of it still being 'the greatest mansion to be found outside London and

Westminster' a 'century later'. [Neville Williams, *Thomas Howard, Fourth Duke of Norfolk* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1964), p. 45.] According to Williams, the palace may also have incorporated a space specially prepared or reserved for performances. (He alludes to there being a 'playhouse' in the palace. [Williams, p. 45.] I have not been able to confirm that this was the case, and there is no mention of a playhouse in the records of performances at the palace.)

- ¹² There are several references to players in the Elizabethan household accounts of the Constables of Everingham in 1571. ['Professional Players in Northern England, Parts I and II', a paper given by Barbara D. Palmer and John M. Wasson at the Annual Meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America, at Washington D. C. in 1997, 1-21 (p. 10).] Lord Hastings' players received four marks for performing at Drax. [Palmer and Wasson, p. 10.] The house at Drax was converted from Drax Priory, bought by Sir Marmaduke Constable 'for £200' in 1538, after its suppression. [J. T. Cliffe, *The Yorkshire Gentry: From the Reformation to the Civil War* (London: Athlone, 1969), p. 368.] (There are also references to players being provided with meals at Drax in 1571. The Earl of Leicester's players were provided with dinner and breakfast, and Lord Hopton's players were given dinner. [Palmer and Wasson, p. 10.] They may have performed at Drax as well.) There is also a payment in the same year to Lord Mounteagle's players (of three marks), probably for giving a performance. [Palmer and Wasson, p. 10.] According to Palmer and Wasson, it is not clear in this instance that the troupe visited and performed at Drax. The performance could have occurred therefore at the family's Everingham residence, Everingham Hall. (This Hall was rebuilt for the family either by Sir Marmaduke Constable (d. 1575) or his son.) [Cliffe, p. 368.] Everingham Hall is not included in the list of houses as there is not clear evidence that players performed there.

Drax Priory does not appear to survive. Similarly, while there is an Everingham Hall today, it dates from the eighteenth century and probably replaced the Tudor house of the Constable family. Pevsner describes the present Hall as 'a handsome house, partly Georgian, partly neo-Georgian. It was built for William Haggerston in 1757-64.' [*The Buildings of England: Yorkshire, The East Riding*, ed by Nikolaus Pevsner, with contributions from John Hutchinson (London: Penguin, 1972), p. 226.]

- ¹³ The Hall 'has been largely demolished, but the dovecote survives.' [Pevsner, *Suffolk*, p. 214.]
- ¹⁴ The house survives to the present but parts of the building have been renovated and changed since the sixteenth century (see plate 30). The hall, however, survives partly intact: 'The original hall of the house was the large NE room on the ground floor. Its ceiling is by Barry, but its screen and gallery are original. The dais was at the N end, and there is behind it, in the N wall, a seven-light window.' [Pevsner, *North Lancashire*, p. 129.] The hall, which was built in 1600-5, also has 'a raised minstrels' gallery above.' The room was 'altered in 1816-18 and again in 1850-2 but the hall screen and minstrels' gallery do not appear to have been much affected by these renovations although the ceiling of the gallery was lowered (see plate 31). [George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. xlv.]
- ¹⁵ Today, there is a farm at Golden. The farm contains some traces of 'a hall-house of the late 1530s, refronted and probably much reconstructed a century later, and again added to in the C18. A stone overmantel remains from the C16 house, with carved tritons.' [*The Buildings of England: Cornwall*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner and Enid Radcliffe (London: Penguin 1951; repr. 1970), p. 74.] Presumably, the hall-house was that owned by the Tregian family in the sixteenth century.
- ¹⁶ Gowthwaite Hall was demolished in the late nineteenth century when the Gowthwaite reservoir was created. A new Hall was 'built of the old stone, and as near as possible to the old plan.' This stands 'beside the reservoir now.' [Information kindly provided by Anne Ashley Cooper, a direct descendant of the Yorke family, in a private communication, 1st January, 1999.]
- ¹⁷ In 1516 Grimsthorpe Castle was 'granted to William, tenth Lord Willoughby de Eresby, whose daughter married Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, in 1533. It was they who enlarged the castle. [...] In 1539 Brandon was granted the lands of the abbey, the materials of which he clearly pillaged for his new work. He built three small towers and four ranges to form a courtyard, all of which survives, and added a second court.' [*The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner and John Harris, revised by Nicholas Antram, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 1964; repr. 1995), pp. 346-7.] The castle has been almost wholly rebuilt since the late sixteenth century (e.g. in 1685 'Robert, third Earl of Lindsey, commissioned a brand new north front in a mature classical style.') [Pevsner, *Lincolnshire*, p. 347.] In the eighteenth century there were plans to rebuild the whole castle, using the designs of Sir John Vanburgh. Vanburgh died, but the renovations continued. [Pevsner, *Lincolnshire*, p. 347.]

In the 1560s the house was in the possession of Richard Bertie, esquire and his wife, Lady Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk. Lady Katherine appears to have been responsible for patronising the

players who visited the house. The performances may have been staged in the hall. The medieval hall does not survive, but it appears to have been a 'two-storey hall', like that found in the present house.

The existing hall may also be in the same location as the earlier hall. [Pevsner, *Lincolnshire*, p. 347.]

- ¹⁸ The Hall survives to the present and is well preserved. [For example, the 'hall' of the house has been little changed since the sixteenth century: 'the roof was renewed in 1923-5; otherwise there is nothing here less than 350 years old.'] [Pevsner, *Derbyshire*, p. 225.] (See plate 36b)

- ¹⁹ The 'only part of the castle to remain complete in its medieval form is the Chapel.' The remainder of the Castle has been rebuilt or renovated since the sixteenth century. [*The Buildings of England: Yorkshire, The West Riding*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner, revised by Enid Radcliffe, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 1959; repr. 1974), p. 256.]

- ²⁰ Hengave Hall 'is now a Roman Catholic Ecumenical Centre, run by the Sisters of the Assumption.' The house was commissioned in 1525 by Thomas Kytson and was built by 1538. The house is largely of 'late Gothic style'. Inside, 'the Hall is greatly restored but it still contains much fine workmanship, and in the chapel early-16th-c stained glass shows scenes from the Book of Genesis and the life of Christ.' [*The New Shell Guide to England*, ed. by John Hadfield (Norwich: Rainbird Publishing Group, 1970; repr. 1981), p. 402.]

- ²¹ Ingatestone was 'a manor of the nunnery of Barking.' [*The Buildings of England: Essex*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner, revised by Enid Radcliffe (London: Penguin, 1954; repr. 1965), p. 251.] It came into Sir William Petre's hands in 1539. 'The house is of brick and was externally complete by 1548, though interior work seems to have gone on to c. 1560. It consisted originally of a base court, a middle court, and an inner court. What remains is chiefly the inner court, though shorn of its west range, which contained the Great Hall.' [Pevsner, *Essex*, p. 251.] (See plate 29b) The Hall, which may have been used for plays 'was about 40 feet long and 20 feet wide, and was "wainscotted", or panelled.' [F. G. Emmison, *Tudor Secretary: Sir William Petre at Court and Home* (London: Longmans, 1961), p. 29.]

- ²² There was 'a stage plaie at kendale Castle' in 1621-2. [*REED: Cumberland, Westmorland, and Gloucestershire*, ed. by Audrey Douglas and Peter Greenfield (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1986), p. 188.] The castle survives to the present as a ruin. It dates 'from the thirteenth century' and is situated 'on a high natural mound'. Katherine Parr was born there when her father, Thomas Parr was Lord of the Castle. [Hadfield *The New Shell Guide to England*, p. 814.] However, the castle was to come in to Queen Elizabeth's hands through an exchange with the widow of the Marquess of Northampton.

According to Douglas and Greenfield, 'by 1572, just before passing into royal hands, the castle itself was already approaching ruin; a survey describes what remained: "The out wall embattled 40 ft square. And within the same no building left; saving only on the north side is situate the front of the gate-house, the hall, with an ascent of stairs to the same, with a buttery and pantry at the end thereof; one great chamber, and two or three lesser chambers and rooms of ease adjoining to the same: being all in decay both in glass and state [...]" (Nicolson and Burn, vol 1, 46).' [Douglas and Greenfield, p. 236.] The domestic buildings were apparently 'never subsequently inhabited or restored, and the play acted "at" Kendal Castle was almost certainly staged outdoors in the castle precincts, possibly on land in which the corporation had acquired an interest'. [Douglas and Greenfield, p. 236.]

- ²³ Only a small part of the Tudor house survives. Pevsner alludes to a 'fragment of an Early Tudor house of red brick diapered with blue. At the back four upper windows with four-centred arches, and elementary tracery.' The house was 'built by the Duke of Norfolk,' Thomas Howard. [*The Buildings of England: N W and South Norfolk*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner (London: Penguin, 1962; repr. 1973), p. 217.] The house was built 'in the form of a letter H' in keeping with the family name. 'The bar of the H divided into two courts, Ewery and Shelfhanger. Everything about it was in "the grandest manner".' [Williams, p. 3.]

As well as being grand in its size and decoration, the house was well-equipped with musical instruments. 'There were sets of viols, lutes and zithers, flutes, a shawm, three pairs of virginals and a regal, or portable reed organ'. [Williams, p. 44.] Playing clothes may have been kept at the palace as well. (There is a list of costumes for plays and masks in the family records. It includes "five topped hats of slight cloth of gold and cloth of silver, with tassels of crimson silk and gold in the top of them"; a Prologue's cap; visers; "caps and faces" of cats and white foxes, and jerkins with checkered satin sleeves.' Robes 'for the Lord of Misrule and his train' were apparently 'kept in a special chest in the wardrobe at Kenninghall' as well.) [Williams, pp. 45-6.]

- ²⁴ The surviving Castle is largely in ruins. However, the walls of the great hall still stand affording an

insight into its appearance in the late sixteenth century when Queen Elizabeth visited and was entertained by players.

²⁵ As Pevsner reports, 'the North family had a big mansion at Kirtling. Most of it was pulled down in 1801, and all that remains is the Gatehouse.' [*The Buildings of England: Cambridgeshire*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 1954; repr. 1977), p. 420.]

²⁶ Knowsley House was one of the country residences of the Stanley family (Earls of Derby). John Leland alluded to the house in the early sixteenth century, describing, 'Knollesley, a park a pretty house of the earls of Derby, within a mile of Prescott.' [Cited in *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Lancashire*, III, ed. by William Farrer and J. Brownbill (London: Constable, 1907; repr. London and Folkestone: Dawsons, 1990), p. 166.] Before the Civil War 'Lathom was the principal residence of the family, but after its destruction Knowsley took its place.'

The house survives but has been much altered since the Jacobean period, as is revealed in the Victoria County History survey of the present house: 'The house is L-shaped, with an east wing some 415 ft. long, joining towards its south end by a south wing about 290 ft. long, the latter being the older portion, and said by Pennant to have been built "by Thomas, the first earl of Derby, for the reception of his son-in-law Henry VII." Parts of the walls may be as old as this time, but there are now no architectural features which can be older than the latter part of the seventeenth century, with the doubtful exception of the three pointed arches in the kitchen.' [Farrer and Brownbill, *Lancashire*, III, p. 166.]

²⁷ Lathom House was the main residence of the Stanley family in Lancashire until it was destroyed in the Civil War. Leland visited the house c. 1540 and described it as, 'Lathom, most part of stone. The chiefest house of the earl of Derby. 2 miles from Ormskirk.' [Cited in Farrer and Brownbill, *Lancashire*, III, p. 251.]

²⁸ The house 'was pulled down in 1819 and the materials used for the new range at Chatsworth.' [Pevsner, *Yorkshire, The East Riding*, p. 306.]

²⁹ Longleat survives but has been renovated and changed since the early seventeenth century. [*The Buildings of England: Wiltshire*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner (London: Penguin, 1963), p. 279.]

³⁰ During the late sixteenth century Ludlow Castle was the residence of the President of the Council of the Marches and the base for the Council. It was built c. 1090 by Roger de Lacy and 'today much of it still stands', although alterations have been made since the sixteenth century. [Hadfield, *The New Shell Guide*, p. 639.]

Plays were staged on several occasions at the castle, including in 1566-7 when the bailiffs of the town made a payment to 'the chylterne which did play in the castell', and in 1576-77 when a payment was made 'to my lorde staford players in the ester weeke that played in the castell.' [REED: *Shropshire*, ed. by J. Alan B. Somerset, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1994), I, p. 82, p. 85.] As Somerset observes, the 'performances in Ludlow Castle no doubt indicate occasions when the town entertained the lord president and members of the council'. The performances might have been staged in the great hall of the castle which was 'a room that measured approximately 30 by 60 feet'. [REED: *Shropshire*, ed. by J. Alan B. Somerset, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1994), II, p. 384, p. 396.]

³¹ There was originally an Archbishop's Palace at Mortlake. This was given to Thomas Cromwell in 1536. He worked upon the house and then sold it to the King. The house was subsequently granted to Katherine Parr and later to a series of individuals. [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Surrey*, IV, ed. by William Page (London: Constable, 1913), pp. 69-70.] 'Mortlake House was standing in 1663, but appears to have been pulled down soon after 1700.' [Page, *Surrey*, III, p. 70.]

³² Mortlake was held by various people during the Elizabethan and Jacobean period. In the 1580s, the House appears to have been in the possession of Sir Thomas Cecil as he 'granted Mortlake House in 1590 to Robert Walter.' In the same year Walter sold it to Elizabeth Stukeley (widow of Hugh Stukeley). Her son, Sir Thomas Stukeley sold it to William Penn in 1607. 'In 1608 it had come into the possession of Edward Myles, the servant of the young princes Henry and Charles. He died that year, leaving his estates to his son Ralph, then aged 21.' [Page, *Surrey*, IV, p. 70.]

³³ Ranulph of Dacre 'received licence to crenellate in 1335.' The Castle was later 'altered and added' to by Thomas, Lord Dacre in 1520, and turned into a mansion by Lord William Howard in 1604 when he 'came into possession, through his wife, who was a Dacre.' [*The Buildings of England: Cumberland and Westmorland*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner (London: Penguin, 1967; rep. 1973), p. 167.]

The Castle survives little changed since the early seventeenth century, although some restoration work was necessary 'after a disastrous fire in 1844' (see plate 36a). Salvin, who was responsible for the renovations 'freshened up everything, but seems to have added little of his own.' [Pevsner, *Cumberland and Westmorland*, p. 167.] The great hall, which may have been used for play performances, survives with some alterations: 'The Great Hall is the largest in the county (78 by 24 ft.). It has a large fireplace with segmental head. The oaken beasts are supposed to be of Dacre's time. The roof is Salvin's.' [Pevsner, *Cumberland and Westmorland*, p. 168.]

- ³⁴ 'Alton or Olton, later New Park is mentioned in 1189 in the charter of Burscough Priory. [...] In 1198 it appears to have been a hamlet. [...] In the course of time, perhaps in the fifteenth century, it had ceased to be a hamlet, and the lords of Lathom turned it into a park, called Lady Park or New Park.' [Farrer and Brownbill, *Lancashire*, III, p. 254.]

A lodge was built in the park. This served as a third Country residence for the powerful Stanley family in the early modern period. (The family's two larger and more important country houses were Knowlsey Park and Lathom House.) The New Park house was apparently 'pulled down in the 18th century.' [Farrer and Brownbill, *Lancashire*, III, p. 254.]

- ³⁵ The house at Penshurst survives to the present, although parts of the building have been renovated and changed since the sixteenth century. The hall, however, 'is miraculously preserved, entirely in its medieval state. By C14 standards it is large, 62 feet long, 39 feet wide, four bays in all, the end bays masked outside.' [*The Buildings of England: West Kent and the Weald*, ed. by John Newman, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 1969; repr. 1976), p. 457.]
- ³⁶ Skipton Castle 'was first built in Norman times by Robert de Romille and his successors. Of their time only one gateway remains. The castle received its present form in the early C14, the time of Henry VIII, and the mid C17.' Lady Anne Clifford 'reconditioned the Castle after its partial demolition in 1649.' Few changes have been made since the mid-seventeenth century. The Great Hall of the medieval castle survives, but its windows 'date partly from the time of Henry VIII, partly from that of Lady Anne Clifford.' [Pevsner, *Yorkshire, The West Riding*, pp. 486-7.]
- ³⁷ Smithills Hall is extant and now functions as Smithills Hall Museum (see plate 32). The building is 'well preserved', having been changed little since the Elizabethan period. 'The oldest part is the great hall in the north range. This is assigned to the early fifteenth century.' [*The Buildings of England: South Lancashire*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner (London: Penguin, 1969), p. 89.]

The hall is stone-flagged 'with a steep gabled roof of dark beams filled in with white plaster. At the western end there are two big arched doorways that were probably screened off by a "speer" or freestanding hall screen, as at Rufford Old Hall.' [George, *REED: Lancashire*, p. xlv.] The hall measures c. 30 feet by c. 34 feet (see plate 33). [Information kindly supplied by Angela Thomas, Bolton Museum, in a private communication (14 May, 1998).]

- ³⁸ The Elizabethan house at Stoneyhurst was begun in 1592 by Sir Richard Shireburn. 'He started with the gatehouse and moved south, and his son then moved east' after Sir Richard's death in 1594. In the eighteenth century the house was offered 'to the Society of Jesus' and it became Stoneyhurst College. [Pevsner, *North Lancashire*, p. 239.] The College survives, but the original buildings at Stoneyhurst have been altered and added to various times since the eighteenth century (e.g. new buildings were added in 1799).

The Great Hall of the Elizabethan house survives and now functions as the college refectory. Originally, it was '60 ft. long by 27 ft. in breadth and 19 ft. 6 in. high. It was extended northwards in 1856-7 to its present length of 90 ft., but the other dimensions remain unaltered. It is lit by a range of mullioned windows with single transom on the west side towards the quadrangle and by a bay window 15 ft. 6 in. wide by 12 ft. 6 in. deep on either side of the dais at the south end.' [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Lancashire*, VII, ed. by William Farrer and J. Brownbill (London: Constable, 1912; repr. Folkestone: Dawsons, 1992), p. 11.] (See plate 37)

- ³⁹ 'The site of the Priory of St Sepulchre, on the northern edge of Warwick, was bought in 1546 by Thomas Hawkins, otherwise known as Thomas Fisher. Reputedly the son of a Warwick fishmonger [...] he went into the service first of the Duke of Somerset and then of John Dudley, later Earl of Warwick and Duke of Northumberland, and gradually accumulated a substantial estate of lands formerly belonging to the Church. And "being thus enricht with such ample possessions", in Dugdale's words, "he pull'd to the ground this Monastery and raised in the place of it a very fair House."' [Tyack, p. 209.]

Queen Elizabeth visited in 1572 and Fisher died in 1576. His son sold the Priory in 1582 to 'a lawyer, John Puckering, who later became Lord Keeper of the Great Seal.' [Tyack, p. 209.] His son,

Thomas succeeded him in 1596, 'was made a Baronet in 1612, [and] was probably responsible for rebuilding the east or hall range of Fisher's house in the form which it retained until its demolition in 1925.' [Tyack, p. 210.] The surviving house was 'taken to Virginia [America] in 1927 by Mr and Mrs Wedell. [...] What remains on the site is [...] a bit of the ground floor with a mullioned and transomed window and part of an early C18 addition.' [*The Buildings of England: Warwickshire*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner and Alexandra Wedgwood (London: Penguin, 1966; repr. 1986), p. 462.]

The fact that players visited the priory in the early modern period during its possession by the Puckerings was kindly drawn to my attention by Alan B. Somerset, who is currently researching dramatic activity in Warwickshire for a future REED volume.

- ⁴⁰ Wardley Hall and other neighbouring lands were sold to William and Gilbert Sherrington between 1562-1568. The family later sold the Hall in 1609 to Roger Downes. [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Lancashire*, IV, ed. by William Farrer and J. Brownbill (London: Constable, 1911; repr. London: Dawsons, 1966; Folkestone: Dawsons, 1990), p. 384.] The Hall 'was originally a timber-framed house with an inner courtyard and a moat. "Originally" means probably c. 1500 or a little later. Of that time, however, there is externally only a certain amount of the timbers of the courtyard sides, with closely set uprights and diagonal braces, and internally much of the great hall.' [Pevsner, *South Lancashire*, p. 434.]

The building has been restored and repaired several times (e.g. 1894). Consequently, 'it is very difficult to affix a date definitely to any portion of it.' [Farrer and Brownbill, *Lancashire*, IV, p. 384.] However, the part of the house containing the great hall 'may belong to the end of the fifteenth or first half of the sixteenth century.' [Farrer and Brownbill, *Lancashire*, IV, p. 384.] The hall (which was perhaps used for plays) originally measured 'about 40 ft. long by 21 ft.' There was a screen at the east end 'with a gallery' over it. [Farrer and Brownbill, *Lancashire*, IV, p. 387.] The hall was 'at a comparatively early date, divided into two by a wall about 12 ft. from its west end. A floor appears to have been inserted at the same time. [...] The appearance of the open timber-roofed hall, may, however, still be realised in the upper room, the whole extent of the original roof having been exposed in the last restoration.' [Farrer and Brownbill, *Lancashire*, IV, p. 387.] (See plate 35b)

- ⁴¹ There is a payment in 1609 to 'the players' in the Household accounts of the Godfreys of Winchelsea. The payment may be for a performance at their Winchelsea home, although we cannot be certain that this was the case. [REED: *Sussex*, ed. by Cameron Louis, forthcoming.]
- ⁴² Pevsner describes the surviving Winkburn hall as, 'a fine building [...] of about 1700 or somewhat earlier.' This suggests that it replaced the earlier Tudor Hall (although it is possible that the house incorporates some fragments of the earlier Hall). When Pevsner described the Hall, it had been 'left empty to decay.' [*The Buildings of England: Nottinghamshire*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner, revised by Elizabeth Williamson (London: Penguin, 1951; repr. 1979), pp. 380-1.]
- ⁴³ Wollaton survives, little changed externally; but, internally, many alterations and renovations have been made since the early seventeenth century. As Friedman reports: 'Wollaton was one of many houses, including Longleat and Chatsworth, in which a campaign of renovation at the turn of the nineteenth century greatly altered the interior, leaving the outer walls intact.' Various renovations were carried out internally in the early nineteenth century. [Alice T. Friedman, *House and Household in Elizabethan England: Wollaton Hall and the Willoughby Family* (London and Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989), p. 167.] (See plate 29a)
- ⁴⁴ Woodstock was a royal manor 'before the Norman Conquest [...]. The park was first enclosed in the early C12 by Henry I, who kept a zoo here and built a palace, or more probably a hunting lodge.' [*The Buildings of England: Oxfordshire*, ed. by Jennifer Sherwood and Nikolaus Pevsner (London: Penguin, 1974), p. 856.] Queen Elizabeth made Sir Henry Lee Chief Crown Officer at Woodstock (c. 1571), and was entertained by him at Woodstock in 1575. [E. K. Chambers, *Sir Henry Lee: An Elizabethan Portrait* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1936), pp. 81-2.]

Members of the Royal family continued to stay 'frequently [at Woodstock] until the Civil War, when the palace was besieged and badly damaged. In 1704 the manor was presented by Queen Anne to John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough, who built Blenheim Palace [...] and demolished the remains of the old palace.' [Sherwood and Pevsner, *Oxfordshire*, p. 856.]

⁴⁵ 'The chief Curwen mansion, but now the property of the town, which leaves it to decay.' It was built in 1379. 'Of that time is the pele tower in the SE corner with its vaulted basement. The hall probably lay N of it and filled the E wing. [...] The building grew by two Late Elizabethan wings linking the E range with the gatehouse and now appears quadrangular. The features are mostly of 1782-1828.' [Pevsner, *Cumberland and Westmorland*, p. 209].

Appendix vii

Pericles and Lear at Gowthwaite [1609-10]

In William Harrison's Star Chamber deposition he stated that 'about Candelemas in the seventh year of his maiestes Reigne of England [...] There was two playes or Interludes, acted and played in the howse of the said Sir John yorke at Gowlthwaite by Christofer Sympson, Robert Sympson, John Sympson <.> Richard Simpson, Cuthbert Sympson, Edward Whitfeld, Robert Low<.> Thomas Pant and this deponent, who do all dwell in Egton.'¹ Later in his deposition he identifies the plays performed as two Shakespeare plays: 'He saith that one of the foresaid playes [...] acted and plaied as aforesaid was Perocles prince of Tire, And the other was kinge Lere' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 30).²

When the Simpson troupe arrived at Gowthwaite before their performance of *St Christopher* they were greeted by Yorke's bailiff, Roger Harbergeon, and then taken to meet Sir John, offering him a choice of two plays (*St Christopher* and *The Three Shirleys*). A similar meeting probably occurred when the troupe arrived with their Shakespeare plays. Whether or not the company offered Yorke a choice from a wider selection of plays, the fact that they invited him to see Shakespeare's plays, and his preference for these dramas is intriguing, providing further evidence that neither the company or the recusants they visited were exclusively interested in the performance of religious, propagandist plays.

The troupe's reasons for carrying Shakespeare's works to Gowthwaite Hall are likely to have been several. As new and successful plays from the world of the London playhouses, Shakespeare's works were fashionable and promised to be popular with audiences. The plays are also likely to have been among the newest in the company's repertory, providing a further motive for offering to stage them. Such performances would allow the troupe to 'showcase' their latest dramatic wares and to practise their staging. At the same time, by revealing themselves to be familiar with plays from the London playhouses and performing the same works as professional London companies the troupe were perhaps implicitly calling to be compared with established, authorised acting companies.³

¹ London, Public Record Office, Star Chamber 8 19 / 10, mb. 30. Hereafter references to this manuscript will be cited in the text.

² Harrison does not mention performing *St Christopher* suggesting that he was perhaps deliberately discussing another visit to Gowthwaite Hall rather than the visit during which the Raphabus play was performed.

³ Notably, in his deposition, William Harrison claimed indirect authorisation for the play performances following a similar line of argument. He protested that 'the plaies which they so plaid were [...] such as were acted in comon and publick places and Staiges [...] And such matters as were prynted in the bookes' (PRO, STAC 8 19/10, mb. 30). As Boddy notes, the implication 'was that a printed play would have received a licence to be performed in a London theatre by the

Similarly varied explanations can be offered for Yorke's commissioning of the Shakespeare productions, ranging from the pragmatic (e.g. he may only have been offered a choice of Shakespearean dramas) to the symbolic (e.g. like the company, he may have wished to impress his friends, neighbours and tenants with his up-to-date theatrical tastes). It could even have been a choice made purely on the grounds of interesting play summaries afforded by the company.

However, another interpretation of the evidence is possible. The Simpson company and 'popishly' affected hosts, such as Yorke, may have considered Shakespeare's plays to be sympathetic to Catholicism and Catholic cultural interests. [In other words, they did not draw any distinction between Shakespeare's dramas and the 'popish' plays performed by the troupe.] Unlikely as this argument might at first appear, there is some evidence in its support. Stephen Greenblatt, for instance, has described how *King Lear* could have been interpreted as being 'strangely sympathetic [...] to the situation of persecuted Catholics', Edgar's story bearing an 'odd and unsettling resemblance to the situation of the Jesuits in England.'⁴ Richard Wilson suggests that *Pericles* was, likewise, amenable to readings sympathetic to Catholicism.⁵ That Shakespeare and his plays were acceptable to, and popular with, Catholics might also be less surprising if he himself was a Catholic sympathiser, as some scholars have argued.⁶ However, whether or not Shakespeare and his dramas were perceived

Master of the Revels' and that, therefore, the performances were in some sense authorised. [G. W. Boddy, 'Players of Interludes in North Yorkshire in the early seventeenth century', *North Yorkshire Record Office Publications*, 7:3 (1976), p. 106.]

⁴ Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), p. 122.

One of Shakespeare's sources for *King Lear* is Samuel Harsnett's, *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*. Published in 1603 the book launches a fierce attack upon exorcisms (e.g. as a theatrical fraud). In the play Harsnett's arguments are 'loyally reiterated, but in a curiously divided form. The voice of skepticism is assimilated to Cornwall, to Goneril, and above all to Edmund.' While 'the fraudulent possession are given to the legitimate Edgar, who is forced to such shifts by the nightmarish persecution directed against him' (p. 121). Viewed from an 'unofficial' Catholic perspective, the story of Edgar and Edmond could have been read 'as an allegory in which Catholicism is revealed to be the persecuted legitimate brother forced to defend himself by means of theatrical illusion against the cold persecution of his skeptical bastard brother Protestantism' (p. 121). Peter Milward suggests that the parallels between the plight of Edgar and Jesuit priests in England may not have been coincidental, 'the lot of such priests as Weston and Dibdale' possibly providing 'Shakespeare with a suggestion for his portrayal of Edgar in hiding'. (Cited in Greenblatt, p.190.)

⁵ Wilson suggests that, the play's dramatisation of familial separation, followed by rediscovery and reunion might have been read as an allegory of England's separation from the Church of Rome and of the Catholic hope that England would rejoin the Old Church. [Richard Wilson, 'Shakespeare and the Somerville plot', a paper given at the 'Shakespeare and the Warwickshire Catholic World' Conference at Stratford-upon-Avon, 19th September, 1998.]

⁶ Shakespeare was apparently accused of being sympathetic to Catholicism by at least one contemporary. John Speed spoke critically of Robert Persons and Shakespeare as 'this papist and

to be sympathetic to Catholicism, the little evidence there is suggests that the Simpsons and their hosts (including Catholics such as Yorke) were primarily interested in plays and theatre as entertainment.

The Plays in Performance

The performances of the plays are likely to have taken place in the hall, as was the case when *St Christopher* was staged at Gowthwaite. It is also likely that they were performed upon a temporary stage (probably erected at the upper end of the hall). From the testimony of William Harrison we learn that printed copies of the plays were used as the company's prompt-books, Harrison defending the Shakespeare performances by arguing that 'the plaies which they so plaid were [...] such matters as were prynted in the bookes' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 30).⁷ As in the London playhouses, parts were presumably copied out from the master texts and distributed to the respective players for them to memorize.

As both plays require large casts but were performed by only nine players (according to company member, William Harrison) we know that they, like the King's Men, must have had recourse to doubling when performing *Lear* and *Pericles*. Like any professional patronised company, the Simpson troupe also appear to have travelled with their own stock of costumes

his poet'. [Cited by Richard Wilson in 'Ghostly Fathers', a paper given in the Centre for the Study of the Renaissance, Warwick University, 31st January, 1997.] While a case can be made for Shakespeare's Catholicism, the evidence is not conclusive. However, he was certainly not without Catholic connections. His mother's family, the Ardens were well-known Catholic sympathisers and Shakespeare's father, John appears to have been a recusant Catholic (e.g. in 1757 a 'Catholic profession of faith in the name of John Shakespeare was found in the rafters of Shakespeare's Henley Street house'). [Peter Thomson, *Shakespeare's Professional Career* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), p. 16.]

However, the northern Catholic community may have had an additional reason for favouring Shakespeare's works, several modern scholars suggesting that the playwright spent time in at least one Catholic household as a servant and player. (The theory is based upon the assumption that Shakespeare is to be identified with the William Shakeshafte whose services are commended to Thomas Hesketh in the 1581 will of Alexander Houghton of Lea. In this will Houghton also bequeaths Hesketh his instruments and playing clothes.) [George, REED: *Lancashire*, p. 350.] As Michael Dobson records, Richard Wilson 'published an article in the *TLS* a few months reviving the claim that the young William Shakespeare can be identified with the actor William Shakeshafte who is named in the will of one of Edmond Campion's Lancashire disciples in 1581'. [*London Review of Books*, 16th July, 1998, p. 25.] The identification of Shakespeare and 'Shakeshafte' has yet to be convincingly established, however.

⁷ Harrison's insistence that *Lear* and *Pericles* were performed from copies of the printed plays has surprised a number of modern scholars of *Pericles* in particular. Mowat refers to 'the unlikelihood' of the quarto of 1609 being used as a prompt copy, citing the comments of F. D. Hoeniger in his Arden edition of the play. He described the play as 'grossly corrupt', containing dialogue of 'manifest nonsense', stage directions 'bare to the point of vagueness' and numerous missing or 'misattributed' speech headings. [Barbara A. Mowat, 'The Theatre and Literary Culture' in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. by John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University, 1997), 213-230 (p. 218).]

and props (such as the cross and different coloured costumes employed in *St Christopher*). The performances of *Lear* and *Pericles* are, therefore, unlikely to have been uncostumed, bare boards productions. However, as closer attention to the staging demands of the two texts reveals, some degree of ingenuity may have been necessary to meet their staging requirements.

Both plays implicitly call for several larger or more unusual items of stage furniture such as the stocks in *Lear* (Q1, scene 7, 123), and the coffin, tomb and knights' *imprese* in *Pericles* (scenes 12, 18 and 6); and they require a wide variety of costumes.⁸ Although the troupe might have omitted props such as the *imprese*, calling upon the audience to imagine them instead, there is no reason to assume that this was the case. They could have made the special props they needed for the two Shakespeare plays (including appropriately painted shields for the *imprese*), just as they are likely to have been responsible for making and painting the large yellow wooden cross which they used in their *St Christopher* performances. Other items (such as chairs, letters, torches) could have been borrowed on-site. Similarly, they may have borrowed or acquired cast-off clothing from local nobles for the plays' elite figures and made or adapted costumes in their existing wardrobe for the other roles.

Pericles and *Lear* implicitly require several visual and sound effects in their performance as well (e.g. for the storm scenes included in both plays and for the scenes of on-stage violence in *Lear*).⁹ The Simpson players are unlikely to have been daunted by these staging demands. As the accounts of the *St Christopher* performance reveal, they were capable of producing striking theatrical illusions. The carrying away of the English Minister was accompanied by 'flasheinges of fire' (PRO, STAC 8 19 / 10, mb. 18), a pyrotechnic trick probably created using fireworks. They might have employed fireworks to equally powerful effect when staging the storm sequences in *Lear* and *Pericles*.

⁸ William Shakespeare, *King Lear* (Q1) in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt and others (New York and London: Norton, 1997). Hereafter all references to the play will be cited in the text.

William Shakespeare, *Pericles* (1609) in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt and others (New York and London: Norton, 1997). Hereafter all references to the play will be cited in the text.

⁹ In *Lear* Edmund is required to cut his arm on-stage in Q1, scene 6; and in Q1 scene 14 Cornwall is called to gouge out Gloucester's eyes and Regan stabs a servant. If the troupe followed the example of the public stages, they would have attempted to make these moments convincingly gory or bloody. Like the London players, they may have used bladders filled with animal blood or sponges soaked with wine or vinegar to create the illusion of bleeding, and animal eyes may have been displayed as those of Gloucester during the blinding scene. [See Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 120.]

Like many professional metropolitan acting companies, the troupe may have owned a selection of instruments as well and included one or more musically able members who could provide the sound effects and music called for in plays such as *Pericles* and *Lear* (e.g. music is played to wake the King in *Lear* [Q1, scene 21, 23], and in *Pericles* music is played to raise Thaisa in scene 13, 89). Equally, they might have called upon the skills (and instruments) of people in the households which they visited, or omitted some of the sound effects and music required in the printed texts of the plays they performed. However, even if the troupe did not include music in their *Lear* and *Pericles* productions, they probably retained the songs of the Fool and Marina, William Harrison the resident 'clown' performing the Fool's songs and one of the boy apprentices being trained to sing unaccompanied for Marina's part.

Fortunately, for the Yorkshire troupe neither drama would have required the use of background scenery; but, in keeping with the make-up of contemporary playhouses, their stage-directions assume that the plays will be performed upon a stage backed by several doorways, through which characters enter and exit. [For example, in *Lear* Q1, scene 8 the opening stage-direction reads, 'Enter Kent and Gentleman, at several doors'; and in *Pericles* the dumb shows at the beginning of scenes 5 and 18 allude to two doors: 'Enter at one door Pericles talking with Cleon, all the train with them. Enter at an other door, a gentleman with a letter to Pericles'; 'Enter Pericles at one door, with all his train, Cleon and Dioniza at the other'.] As the stage used by the Simpsons at Gowthwaite is unlikely to have been backed by scenery or doorways, an alternative manner of staging these entries would have been necessary. The most obvious solution was perhaps to treat the two sides of the stage as their entry points (or invisible doorways). A similar compromise was probably employed by London companies when on tour with plays originally written for the playhouses.

Audience Response

No accounts of the two Shakespeare performances at Gowthwaite Hall survive to provide more detailed information about their staging or their reception. Unlike *St Christopher*, they did not occasion controversy or a court case. However, the fact that the company performed several times at Gowthwaite and enjoyed considerable popularity elsewhere in the region suggests that their performances were generally enjoyed and that their repertory (including Shakespeare's plays) was to the tastes of their northern audiences.

Appendix viiiA list of Provincial Churches and Cathedrals where Plays were Performed, 1559-1625

The following catalogue only includes churches and cathedrals which are explicitly recorded as hosting play performances between 1559-1625. The list does not include churches or cathedrals which are only recorded as sponsors of dramatic performances. Similarly, churches whose records include payments relating to 'Robin Hood' and his followers, are only listed if specific reference is made to a dramatic performance being staged in the church or churchyard. Church houses and vicarages used for playing are listed separately below. Where possible, the names of the parish and cathedral churches used as playing spaces are given. If clear reference is not made to the name of a church recorded as a playing venue, indirect evidence has been used to identify the likely location of the performance. Church names identified in the latter manner are shown in *italics*. Those ecclesiastical buildings which survive today and are little changed are indicated with *. Those church buildings which are extant but which have been significantly altered or restored since the early seventeenth century are marked with **.

<u>The Place</u>	<u>The Name of the Church</u>	<u>Space(s) Used</u>
Aldeburgh (Suffolk)	<i>St Peter and St Paul's</i> ** ¹	The church ²
Axbridge (Somerset)	<i>St John the Baptist's</i> * ³	The church ⁴
Beaminster (Dorset)	<i>St Mary's</i> ** ⁵	The church ⁶
Bewdley (Worcestershire)	<i>St Andrew's</i> ⁷	The church ⁸
Bungay (Suffolk)	Holy Trinity ** ⁹	The church yard ¹⁰
Castle Donington (Leicestershire)	<i>St Edward King & Martyr</i> ** ¹¹	The church ¹²
Dartmouth (Devon)	<i>St Saviour's</i> ** ¹³	'at church' ¹⁴
Doncaster (Yorkshire)	<i>St George's</i> ¹⁵	The church ¹⁶
Duns Tew (Oxfordshire)	<i>St Mary Magdalene's</i> ** ¹⁷	The church ¹⁸
Exeter (Devon)	The Cathedral ** ¹⁹	Treasurer's House (in the hall) ²⁰
Gloucester (Gloucestershire)	The Cathedral ** ²¹	The churchyard ²²
Great Burstead (Essex)	<i>St Mary Magdalene</i> * ²³	The chapel ²⁴
Great Marlow (Buckinghamshire)	<i>All Saints</i> (rebuilt, 1834) ²⁵	The church loft ²⁶
Hascombe (Surrey)	<i>St Andrew's</i> ** ²⁷	The church ²⁸
Hornchurch (Essex)	<i>St Helen's</i> ** ²⁹	The church ³⁰
?Leverton (Lincolnshire)	<i>St Mary's</i> ** ³¹	The church ³²
Long Sutton (Lincolnshire)	<i>St Michael the Archangel's</i> * ³³	The church ³⁴
Lyme Regis (Dorset)	<i>Our Lady of the Oats</i>	Chapel yard ³⁵
Manningtree (Essex)	Christ Church (Cathedral) ** ³⁶	
Norwich (Norfolk)	'Chappell nere the New hall' **	The chapel ³⁷
Plymouth (Devon)	<i>St Andrew's</i> ** ³⁸	The church ³⁹
Plymstock (Devon)	<i>All Saints</i> * ⁴⁰	The church ⁴¹
Sherborne (Dorset)	<i>St Mary's Abbey Church</i> ** ⁴²	The churchyard ⁴³
Stockbury (Kent)	<i>St Mary Magdalen</i> ** ⁴⁴	The chancel ⁴⁵
Tewkesbury (Gloucestershire)	Tewkesbury abbey ** ⁴⁶	'in the abbey' ⁴⁷
Tenbury (Worcestershire)	<i>St Mary's</i> ** ⁴⁸	The church ⁴⁹
Thurnby (Leicestershire)	<i>St Luke's</i> ** ⁵⁰	The church ⁵¹
West Ham (Essex)	<i>All Saints</i> ** ⁵²	The church ⁵³
Winslow (Buckinghamshire)	<i>St. Laurence's</i> ** ⁵⁴	The church ⁵⁵
York (Yorkshire)	Cathedral close ** ⁵⁶	Chancellor's House ⁵⁷

Further Churches and Cathedrals which may have been used as playing spaces , 1559-1625

This catalogue lists churches and cathedrals identified indirectly as possible playing places. This includes parish and cathedral churches whose records show that they sponsored plays during the Elizabethan and Jacobean period, but which do not specify the locations of the performances. Many of these churches are likely to have hosted the plays which they sponsored, but cannot be included in the first catalogue because the place of performance is not explicitly stated to be the church or cathedral. [The list does not include churches which are only recorded as owning playing clothes (such as Bodmin), although it is possible that such churches hosted plays during the early modern period.] Again, the names of the parish and cathedral churches are given where possible. Names shown in italics are suggested identifications, based upon indirect evidence. Churches which survive to the present little changed since the early seventeenth century are marked with *. Churches which are extant but which have been significantly altered or renovated are marked **.

The Place

Ashburton (Devon)
 Boston (Lincolnshire)
 Braintree (Essex)
 Brandsby (Yorkshire)
 Braunton (Devon)
 Camborne (Cornwall)
 Canterbury (Kent)
 Chelmsford (Essex)
 Chester (Cheshire)
 Chudleigh (Devon)
 Donnington (Lincolnshire)
 Durham (Durham)
 Holbeach (Lincolnshire)
 Kilminster (Devon)
 Leicester (Leicestershire)
 Lenton (Nottinghamshire)
 Leverington (Cambridgeshire)
 Long Melford (Suffolk)
 New Romney (Kent)
 Shobrooke (Devon)
 St Breoke (Cornwall)
 Tavistock (Devon)
 Winkleigh (Devon)
 Wooton St Lawrence (Hampshire)
 Worfield (Shropshire)

The Name of the Church

St Andrew's *⁵⁸
St Botolph's **⁵⁹
 St Michael's **⁶⁰
All Saints ⁶¹
 St Brannock's *⁶²
 St Meriadocus and St Martin's *⁶³
 Cathedral **⁶⁴
 St Mary's **⁶⁵
 Cathedral **⁶⁶
 St Mary and St Martin's **⁶⁷
St Andrew's **⁶⁸
 Cathedral **⁶⁹
All Saints **⁷⁰
 St Giles's ⁷¹
 St Martin's **⁷²
Holy Trinity (?) ⁷³
St Leonard's **⁷⁴
Holy Trinity **⁷⁵
St Nicholas's ** ⁷⁶
 St Thomas a Becket *⁷⁷
 St Breoke **⁷⁸
 St Eustace's *⁷⁹
 All Saints **⁸⁰
St Lawrence **⁸¹
St Peter's **⁸²

A list of Church Houses and Vicarages used for Play Performances, 1559-1625

Bridgwater (Somerset) [church house] ⁸³
 Plymouth (Devon) [vicarage] ⁸⁴
 Sherborne (Dorset) [church house] **⁸⁵
 Somerton (Dorset) [parish house] ⁸⁶
 Wimborne Minster (Dorset) [church house] ⁸⁷

- ¹ The 'spacious fifteenth century church' survives but 'has lost its chancel'.
[*Collins Guide to English Parish Churches*, ed. by John Betjeman (London: Collins, 1958), p. 342.]
- ² The Earl of Leicester's Men played 'in ye church' at Aldeburgh in 1573-4. [John C. Coldewey, 'Playing Companies at Aldeburgh, 1566-1635', *Malone Society: Collections*, IX (Oxford: Oxford University, 1977), 16-23 (p. 19).]
- ³ *The Buildings of England: N Somerset and Bristol*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner (London: Penguin, 1958; repr. 1973), p. 80.
- ⁴ In 1582 'the Children of the Grammer skoole and the Choristers of the [...] cathedral' went to Axbridge 'to playe in the parishe church.' [*REED: Somerset*, ed. by James Stokes (with Robert J. Alexander), 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1996), I, p. 4.]
- ⁵ *The Buildings of England: Dorset*, ed. by John Newman and Nicholas Pevsner (London: Penguin, 1972), pp. 84-5. Restoration work and alterations have been made to the church since the early seventeenth century (e.g. 'the large W window is of 1874 or 1862'), but overall the medieval church is well-preserved. [Newman and Pevsner, *Dorset*, p. 64.]
- ⁶ 'Stage players played in our parishe church' at Beaminster, 1591-3. [*REED: Dorset / Cornwall*, ed. by Rosalind Conklin Hays and C. E. McGee, Sally L. Joyce and Evelyn S. Newlyn (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1999), p. 121.]
- ⁷ The church was pulled down in 1745.
- ⁸ Players were rewarded for performing 'in the church' in 1571-2. [*REED: Herefordshire / Worcestershire*, ed. by David M. Klausner (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1990), p. 361.]
- ⁹ *The Buildings of England: Suffolk*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner, revised by Enid Radcliffe, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 1961; repr. 1974), pp. 121-2.
- ¹⁰ Edward Molle and his son were paid for 'making the scaffolld for the Interlude in the church yarde' in 1566. ['Records of Plays and Players in Norfolk and Suffolk, 1330-1642', ed. by John M. Wasson and David Galloway, *Malone Society: Collections*, XI (Oxford: Oxford University, 1980-1), p. 143.]
- ¹¹ *The Buildings of England: Leicestershire and Rutland*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner, revised by Elizabeth Williamson with Geoffrey K. Brandwood, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 1960; repr. 1984), pp. 123-4. St Edward King and Martyr is 'a large regular church, essentially of the C13 to C14.' Restoration work was carried out, however, in 1875-7 by William Smith. [Pevsner and Williamson *Leicestershire*, pp. 123-4.]
- ¹² Players performed 'in the church' in 1568. [*REED: Leicestershire*, ed. by Alice Hamilton, forthcoming.]
- ¹³ *The Buildings of England: S Devon*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner (London: Penguin, 1952), p. 113.
- ¹⁴ The Earl of Leicester's Men performed 'at' the church in 1569-70. [*REED: Devon*, ed. by John M. Wasson (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1986), p. 66.]
- ¹⁵ The present St George's Parish Church 'replaced a medieval church burned in 1833.' [*The New Shell Guide to England*, ed. by John Hadfield (Norwich: Rainbird Publishing Group, 1981), p. 692.]
- ¹⁶ The Earl of Leicester's players were paid for 'playing in the church' in 1574. [J. T. Murray, *English Dramatic Companies, 1559-1642*, 2 vols (London: Constable, 1910), II, p. 256.]
- ¹⁷ *The Buildings of England: Oxfordshire*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner and Jennifer Sherwood (London: Penguin, 1974), p. 590.] The church was almost 'entirely rebuilt in 1862.' [Pevsner and Sherwood, *Oxfordshire*, p. 590.]
- ¹⁸ An interlude was performed 'in the church' at Duns Tew in 1584. [*REED: Oxfordshire*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston, forthcoming.]
- ¹⁹ See *Exeter Cathedral: A Celebration*, ed. by Michael Swanton (Crediton: Southgate Publishers, 1991).
- ²⁰ A 'commodye' was acted in 'Mr Lawe his hall Treasurer of the Church' in 1623. [Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 192.] The Treasurer's House was demolished 'in late 1820-21'. [Information kindly supplied by Angela Doughty, Cathedral Archivist in a private communication (15th December, 1998).] The house adjoined 'the cathedral north tower' and 'the scar of its gabled roof is still visible on the tower' (see plate 42). [Swanton, p. 26.]
- ²¹ See David Welander, *The History, Art and Architecture of Gloucester Cathedral* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1991).
- ²² The Queen's Men were rewarded by the Cathedral Chapter for performing in the 'college church yarde' in 1589-90. [*REED: Cumberland, Westmorland, Gloucestershire*, ed. by Audrey Douglas and Peter Greenfield (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1986), p. 311.] (See

plate 45)

- ²³ *Royal Commission on Historical Monuments in England: An Inventory of Historical Monuments in Essex*, IV (London: HMSO, 1923), pp. 54-5.
- ²⁴ In 1579 churchwarden William Hale was presented at the Archdeacon's court having given 'lisennse to players to playe in the chaple' at Great Burstead. [John C. Coldewey, 'The Last Rise and Final Demise of Essex Town Drama', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 36 (1975), 239-260 (p. 248).]
- ²⁵ The medieval church was pulled down in 1832. [Alfred Heneage Cocks, 'The Parish Church of All Saints, Great Marlow', *Records of Buckinghamshire*, 6 (1887-91), 326-340 (p. 327).] (See plate 44)
- ²⁶ Two shillings was received by the Great Marlow churchwardens 'of players for playinge in the churche lofte' (1593-5). [*REED: Buckinghamshire*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston, forthcoming.]
- ²⁷ 'The Chancel and Nave, with North and South aisles, were built about the middle of the 13th century. Early in the 15th century the North and South aisles were rebuilt; later in the same century the North, and South Chapels, the West Tower and the North Porch were added. [...] The church has been restored in modern times, the South Chapel and Aisle being rebuilt in brick.' [*RCHM: Essex*, IV, p. 69.] The performance in the church in 1566 was probably staged either in the chancel (measuring 40 1/2 ft by 16 1/2 ft) or in the nave (53 1/2 ft by 18 1/2 ft). [*RCHM: Essex*, IV, p. 69.] (See plate 43)
- ²⁸ In 1566 'one "Bushe, a churchwarden in Hornchurch (in the archdeaconry of Essex) [...] was presented because he "did bring into the churche certeyn players the which did playe and declare certayn things against the ministers".' [Coldewey, 'The Last Rise', p. 246.]
- ²⁹ *The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner and John Harris, revised by Nicholas Antram, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 1964; repr. 1990), pp. 434-5.]
- ³⁰ In *The History and Antiquities of Boston* (1856), Pishey Thompson records that there was 'playing in the church in 1595'. [Ian Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts and Records of Britain: A Chronological Topography to 1558* (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1984), 167.] The accuracy of this record has yet to be confirmed. This is why the reference appears with a question mark in the list.
- ³¹ Pevsner and Harris, *Lincolnshire*, p. 535.
- ³² Players performed 'in ye church' in 1562-3. ['Records of Plays and Players in Lincolnshire, 1300-1585', ed. by Stanley J. Kahrl, Malone Society: Collections, VIII (Oxford: Oxford University, 1969 [1974]), p. 72.]
- ³³ Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 39. Hadfield, *The New Shell Guide*, p. 236.
- ³⁴ In 1567-8 there were 'sherborn players in the churche'. [Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 212.]
- ³⁵ In a petition of 1611 the inhabitants of Manningtree complained about the poor state of repair of the local Chapel and alluded to its use by players: 'The place of which saide chappell and chappell-yarde now doeth, and for ever since the decaye thereof hath, lyen voyde, open and comon to the king's high waye, and noe man hath had anie proper use or benefyte therof, saving onely at whitsontyde some vayne and ill disposed stage players have very muche abused the saide place and the country with their stage playes in the said place. In consideration wherof, may it please your worships by vertue of the saide commission to order and decree that the said Chappell yarde shalbe Inclosed, and the saide chappell Reedyfied for the purposes aforesaide, and not to be In lyke manner hereafter abused by stage players'. In their response, the commissioners decreed that 'the said place, wch is called the Chappell Yarde, shall never hereafter be used for or with any stage playes or such lyke vayne or profane exercise', indicating that the chapel yard (and not the chapel) had been used for plays performed. [C. Fell Smith, 'A Note on Manningtree in 1611', *Essex Review*, 15 (1906), 153-155 (p. 155).] The chapel, which is said to have been dedicated to 'Our Lady of the Oates', was 'apparently demolished very soon after [the petition], and within five years, in 1616, the present church, consisting of a nave and two aisles, was erected upon a site near [by].' [Fell Smith, p. 154.]
- ³⁶ Lord 'Beauchampes players [...] did playe in christechurche' in 1590, after being denied permission to perform by the town authorities. [*REED: Norwich*, ed. by David Galloway (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1984), p. 96.] In a document prepared 'at the time of the refoundation [of the cathedral] or shortly afterwards, Sir Edward North, chancellor of the court of augmentations', described the cathedral as ' "Christ's church in Norwich of the foundation of King Edward the vjth" . ' [Ralph Houlbrooke, 'Refoundation and Reformation, 1538-1628', in

Norwich Cathedral, Church, City and Diocese, 1096-1996, ed. by Ian Atherton and others (London and Rio Grande: Hambledon Press, 1996), 507-539 (p. 509).] (The cathedral was refounded in 1538.) This evidence indicates that the performance by Lord Beauchamp's players took place somewhere in the Cathedral close.

- ³⁷ In 1564-5 'mr Waterhall and Mr ffavsytt skolemasters' were rewarded 'when ther Skollers played ther interlude before Mr mayor and his bretherne at the comon hall'. Three shillings was also spent upon 'Torches to show lighte in the Chappell when they played', revealing that the performance was given within the chapel of the Common Hall. [Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. 52.] This chapel was converted from the chancel of the old Blackfriars monastery and measures about 100 feet by 33 feet. [Galloway, *REED: Norwich*, p. lxxxiv.] The nave of the old monastic church became the New Hall (or town hall). Today, the 'chapel' is known as Blackfriars Hall, and the 'new hall' as St Andrew's Hall.
- ³⁸ St Andrew's is the largest parish church in Devon (measuring c.185 feet by 96 feet) and probably dates back to the fifteenth century (c. 1430-90). [Pevsner, *S. Devon*, p. 229.] However, 'drastic restoration' work was carried out in the church in the nineteenth century and the church was badly damaged during the Second World War, necessitating further renovations. [Pevsner, *S. Devon*, p. 229.]
- ³⁹ A performance by the boys of Totnes took place 'in the Churche' in 1573-4. [Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 242.]
- ⁴⁰ Pevsner, *S. Devon*, p. 245.
- ⁴¹ Players performed 'in ye churche' in 1568. [Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 277.]
- ⁴² 'In 1540 the abbey church was sold to the town, and the parish church was then demolished. [...] The present church has minor but important Anglo-Saxon features, Norman transepts and crossing, and an Early English Lady Chapel, but is predominantly Perpendicular.' [*The Buildings of England: Dorset*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner and John Newman (London: Penguin, 1972), pp. 368-9.] The church was restored in the 1850s. It measures c. 255 feet long. [Pevsner and Newman, *Dorset*, p. 369.] The length of the churchyard (in which plays were performed) was obviously even greater, providing a large playing area.
- ⁴³ The money raised by the Corpus Christi plays staged at Sherborne church in 1574, included two shillings from 'Thomas fuller for the ground yn the churche yarde', providing indirect confirmation that the plays were staged in the churchyard. [A. D. Mills, 'A Corpus Christi Play and Other Dramatic Activities in Sixteenth Century Sherborne, Dorset', *Malone Society: Collections*, IX (Oxford: Oxford University, 1977), 1-15 (p. 12).]
- ⁴⁴ According to John Newman the church 'was one of the most interesting Early English churches in the county, influenced by the post-1175 work at Canterbury Cathedral; but a fire in 1836 followed by restoration of the E(astern) half, and drastic restoration of the nave by R. C. Hussey in 1851-2, have compromised everything.' [*The Buildings of England: NE and E Kent*, 3rd edn (London: Penguin, 1969; repr. 1983), p. 467.] Some of the chancel (in which the play was apparently performed in 1600) survives unchanged (e.g. 'the chancel arcading [...] is work of c. 1200'). However, the east wall of the chancel and the chancel arch are new. [Newman, *NE and E Kent*, p. 468.]
- ⁴⁵ The vicar of Stockbury, George Hawkes was presented in the church courts having allegedly 'procured & suffered an Enterlude or playe to be played and acted in the Chauncell of our parishe churche of Stockburie' in 1600. [*REED: East Kent*, ed. by James Gibson, forthcoming.]
- ⁴⁶ *The Buildings of England: Gloucestershire, II, The Vale and the Forest of Dean*, ed. by David Verey (London: Penguin, 1970), pp. 357-370.
- ⁴⁷ Plays were performed 'in the abbey' in 1600 to help raise funds for a new battlement for the church tower. [Douglas and Greenfield, p. 540.]
- ⁴⁸ *The Buildings of England: Worcestershire*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner (London: Penguin, 1968; repr. 1977), p. 277.
- ⁴⁹ A play was performed 'in the churche' at Tenbury in 1600. [Klausner, p. 391.]
- ⁵⁰ Parts of the central tower of the church date back to the 12th century, but the 'chancel and nearly everything else' date from 1870-3, and are the work of Slater and Carpenter. [*The Buildings of England: Leicestershire and Rutland*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner (London: Penguin, 1960), p. 253.]
- ⁵¹ In 1614, Thomas Dawkyn was presented 'for makeinge a plaie in the Church vpon St Stephens daye last at night' in Thurnby, Leicestershire (Leicester Record Office, 1 D41 / 13 / 37, fol. 47v.)
- ⁵² *Royal Commision on Historical Monuments in England: An Inventory of Historical Monuments in*

Essex, II (London: HMSO, 1921), pp. 250-1.

The church is relatively well-preserved (but the 'Vestries and South porches' are modern and 'early in the 19th-century the S. Aisle, chapel and E. Wall were refaced with brick.' [*RCHM: Essex*, II, p. 250.]) The performance at the church in 1576 might have been staged in the chancel (measuring 43 ft. by 19ft.), or at the upper end of the nave, as reference is made to people standing on the communion table (which was usually located in the chancel). The nave would have provided a large area for an audience, measuring 88 1/2 ft by 22 ft. [*RCHM: Essex*, II, p. 250.]

⁵³ In 1576 the churchwardens of West Ham were presented in the church courts for allowing two plays to be 'kepte in the church by comon players'. [Coldewey, 'The Last Rise', p. 247.]

⁵⁴ *The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner and Elizabeth Williamson with Geoffrey K. Brandwood, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 1960; repr. 1994), p. 754. The church was restored between 1883-4 by J. O. Scott. [Pevsner and Williamson, *Buckinghamshire*, p. 754.]

⁵⁵ A 'godly interlude' was performed 'in their church' in 1580. Players performed 'ann Interlude in the parishe church of winslow' in 1595 as well. [Johnston, *REED: Buckinghamshire*, forthcoming.]

⁵⁶ See *The Buildings of England: Yorkshire, York and E. Riding*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner (London: Penguin, 1972; repr. 1974), pp. 75-8, p. 109.]

⁵⁷ There was a play 'at Mr Doctor Bennittes' in 1598. [*REED: York*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, 2 vols (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto; London: Manchester University, 1979), I, p. 484.] At this time, Bennett was the Cathedral Chancellor. The performance was therefore presumably in the Chancellor's House. This does not appear to survive to the present.

⁵⁸ In 1563-4 the churchwardens paid two shillings 'to the players'. [Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 30.] [Pevsner, *S. Devon*, p. 39.]

⁵⁹ No performances are recorded at Boston, but in 1578 an order was passed in which it was 'agreed that there shalbe no mo playes [nor] interludes in the church nor in the chauncell nor in the scolle howse'. [Kahrl, p. 5.] By implication, plays had been performed in each of these spaces in the recent past. The church of St Botolph's (to which the order is likely to have referred) was begun as early as 1309 and is large for a parish church (20, 070 square feet in area). Various restorations were carried out internally in the nineteenth century (e.g. the east window was replaced). [Pevsner and Harris, *Lincolnshire*, p. 156.]

⁶⁰ The Elizabethan churchwardens' accounts apparently include allusions to money rasied through play performances. (In 1567 and 1570 the church records include references to receipts 'of the play money'.) [W. A. Mephram, 'Medieval Plays in the Sixteenth Century at Heybridge and Braintree', *Essex Review*, 55 (1946), 8-18 (p. 15).] If the money was raised through play performances, it is likely that the plays were performed at the church. [Pevsner and Radcliffe, *Essex*, pp. 99-100.]

⁶¹ The names of George Pearson and George Sherwin of Brandsby are recorded in the 1615 Archbishop's Visitation Court Book for playing the Sheriff and Robin Hood at a rushbearing. [The Borthwick Institute (York), The Archbishop of York's Visitation Court Book, V 1615/ CB fol. 256v.] Rushbearings were held at church and both entries are recorded in relation to Brandsby parish. This indicates that the play (and the rushbearing) took place at Brandsby church. The medieval church 'appears to have stood on a part of the site now occupied by the Hall (Brandsby Hall), but the old building was pulled down about the year 1767, when the present structure, bearing the same dedication, was begun by Francis Cholmeley.' [*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Yorkshire, North Riding*, II, ed. by William Page (London: St Catherine Press, 1923), p. 106.]

⁶² There are a number of payments to players in the St Brannock Elizabethan churchwardens' accounts (e.g. in 1564-5 the church rewaded 'the plears of Pylton'). [Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 52.] It is likely that the performances took place in or outside the church, although this is not stated to have been the case. The 'remarkably wide nave' may have lent itself to performance use. [Betjeman, p. 138.]

⁶³ The Elizabethan churchwardens' accounts include a couple of payments relating to plays. In 1577-8 'iij s j d' was paid 'to the interlude players', and in 1582-3 fourteen pence was given 'to the Interlude in the parish'. [Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 476.] It is likely that the first payment in particular was for a performance at the church. The church 'is granite throughout, C15. [...] There are two identical aisles, each of five bays, with two lower bays for the chancel. [...] An outer s. aisle was added in 1878.' [*The Buildings of England: Cornwall*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner (London: Penguin, 1951), p. 39.]

⁶⁴ As Patrick Collinson records, 'there are references in the Canterbury Chapter Acta to payments for

the "setting forth of interludes" by the scholars of the grammar school (1561) and to the "setting forth of tragedies, comedies and interludes" (1562).' [Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London: Mamillan, 1988), pp. 170-1.] As the Cathedral sponsored the performances, it is possible that some (or all) of the plays were acted at the Cathedral. The performances may have been staged in the Dean's lodgings, as after the Civil War, 'Cromwell's soldiers demolished the playing place (called "the Dean's great hall") for being prophaned by the King's Scholars having acted plays there.' [Harold Newcomb Hillebrand, *The Child Actors: A Chapter in Elizabethan Stage History* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), p. 14. Hadfield, *The New Shell Guide*, pp. 145-6.]

- ⁶⁵ The church may have been used for some part of the church-sponsored plays performed in 1562. Clearer evidence that the church was used as a playing venue is found in the church records of 1574-76, a payment being made 'for mendinge of x broken holes in the churchwindows wch was done at the late playe.' [Cited in John C. Coldewey, 'Early Essex Drama: A History of Its Rise and Fall, and a Theory concerning the Digby Plays' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Colorado, 1972), p. 322.] By implication, the damage to the windows had been caused during a play performance at the church. (This performance might have been staged in the churchyard, but it is perhaps more likely that such damage to the windows was caused by a performance mounted within the church.) Today the church is the Cathedral of St Mary. Some parts of the medieval building survive (e.g. the fifteenth century west tower), but the church has been renovated and enlarged since the Elizabethan period (e.g. the outer north aisle and north transept were added in 1873). [*The Buildings of England: Essex*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner, revised by Enid Radcliffe, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 1954; repr. 1965), p. 115.] (See plate 41)

- ⁶⁶ The Cathedral made payments to players on several occasions in the Elizabethan period (e.g. in 1589-90 twenty shillings was paid 'to the Queen's players at the appoyntment of mr Deane and the Chapter'). [*REED: Chester*, ed. by Lawrence M. Clopper (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto; London: Manchester University, 1979), p. 159.]

The cathedral church survives to the present but restoration work has been undertaken and alterations have been made to the building internally and externally (e.g. 'a whole series of C19 restorations has made the exterior what it is now and [...] in the majority of cases it has not yet been possible to determine whether the restorers- Hussey in 1844 etc., Scott in 1868 etc., Blomfield after 1882 - reproduced what had been there before or followed their own fancies.') [*The Buildings of England: Cheshire*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner and Edward Hubbard (London: Penguin, 1971), p. 136.]

- ⁶⁷ Pevsner, *S Devon*, p. 79.

The Elizabethan churchwardens' accounts for St Martin's and St Mary's include two payments to players (in 1568 and 1569). [Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 58.]

- ⁶⁸ Pevsner and Harris, *Lincolnshire*, p. 257.

A cast-list for a parish play survives which is thought to date from c. 1563-5. If the play was performed, the parish church would have been an obvious choice of venue (although other venues were used for some parish plays). [Kahrl, pp. 6-7.]

- ⁶⁹ The Cathedral Treasurer's Book includes a payment to the Earl of Leicester's players in 1580. They were paid twenty-six shillings and eight pence. The payment may have been for a performance at the Cathedral. [*REED: Durham*, ed. by Tom Craik and John McKinnell, forthcoming.]

The last major medieval work on the cathedral was completed by 1487-8. [*The Buildings of England: County Durham*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner, revised by Elizabeth Williamson (London: Penguin, 1953; repr. 1983), p. 166.] Restoration work and alterations have been carried out at the cathedral at various times since the early seventeenth century (e.g. there was 'a thorough and thoroughly insensitive C18 restoration'. [Pevsner and Williamson, *Durham*, p. 166.]

- ⁷⁰ Pevsner and Harris, *Lincolnshire*, p. 383.

A payment was made in the Holbeach churchwardens' accounts in 1560 'to Mr callowe for the playeres'. [Kahrl, p. 19.] As the church sponsored the performance it may have been acted at the church.

- ⁷¹ Evidence that the church was used for playing on at least one occasion is provided by payments received from 'fyve players' for 'taringe [tearing?] the windores' of the church in 1625-6. [Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 208.] It seems likely that the damage was caused during their performance.

- ⁷² Betjeman, p. 232.

In 1559-60 the St Martin's churchwardens paid seven pence 'to ye plears for ther paynes'. [*REED:*

Leicestershire, ed. by Alice Hamilton, forthcoming.] The payment may have been for a performance in the church. With 'its exceptionally large south wing' Whitfield White estimates that the church could have accommodated a large audience 'of, say, 500'. [Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation: Protestantism, Patronage, and Playing in Tudor England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993), p. 142.]

⁷³ Indirect evidence that the church was used for playing is found in ecclesiastical court records. In 1580 the churchwardens were cited for allowing 'fightinge braulinge and quarellinge in the church'; they identified the culprits as Lord Berkeley's players. [R. F. B. Hodgkinson, 'Extracts from the Act Books of the Archdeacons of Nottingham', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society*, 30 (1926), p. 50.] However, that the players were in the church suggests that they were performing (or intending to perform) there. The church referred to may have been that converted from the old Priory (Holy Trinity church). [*The Buildings of England: Nottinghamshire*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner (London: Penguin, 1951), p. 138.]

⁷⁴ *The Shell Guide to Cambridgeshire*, ed. by Norman Scarfe (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), p. 157. There are several payments to players in the Elizabethan churchwardens' accounts for Leverington (e.g. in 1568 'xij d' was paid on Christmas day 'to ye players at ye appointmente of ye paryschyoners'). [*REED: Cambridgeshire*, ed. by Anne Brannen, forthcoming.] It is possible that some (or even all) of the performances took place at the church.

⁷⁵ Indirect evidence exists for the performance of at least one play in the church at Long Melford. In 1579 a payment is recorded in the churchwardens' accounts 'to ffyrmin the glasier for mendinge the windows that were broke at the scoole masters playe'. [Wasson and Galloway, p. 185.] By implication, the play had been staged in the church. Holy Trinity church is a relatively large parish church, measuring 'over 150 ft in length', and would have provided a commodious performance venue. [Hadfield, *The New Shell Guide*, p. 414.]

⁷⁶ Hadfield, *The New Shell Guide*, p. 179.

In 1560 the parishioners of New Romney met in the church and agreed 'that the playe of New Romney shall be playd at Wytsonyde next folowyng'. The church was used for at least one of the rehearsals for the 1560 parish production. ('Lawrance ffan' was paid 'for bere fett to ye church when the play was rehersed'.) It is possible that the church was used for part of the four-day performance as well. ['Records of Plays and Players in Kent, 1450-1642', ed. by Giles Dawson, Malone Society: Collections, VII (Oxford: Oxford University, 1965), p. 207.]

⁷⁷ *The Shell Guide to Devon*, ed. by Ann Jellicoe and Roger Mayne (London: Faber and Faber, 1975; repr. 1982), p. 149.

In 1593-4 fourteen shillings was paid by the churchwardens of St Thomas a Becket's to 'the Mynistrils and Pleayers'. [Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 278.] They may have performed together at the church.

⁷⁸ There are several payments relating to performers in the late sixteenth century St Briocus churchwardens' accounts (e.g. in 1566-7 a payment was made to 'enterlwd players of Saint denys'). [Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 506.] The church-sponsored performances are most likely to have been performed in or outside the church, as there is no other obvious playing venue in the small village of St Breoke. In its dimensions and lay-out, the church has changed little since the early seventeenth century, but the building was 'extensively rebuilt' in 1677, having fallen into disrepair. ['A Brief History and Guide to the Parish Church of St. Breoke', a pamphlet produced by the church, no date.] Internally, the church measures approximately 99 feet by 13 feet, affording a sizeable indoor venue (see plate 46).

⁷⁹ Pevsner, *S Devon*, pp. 275-6.

Several payments to players occur in the late sixteenth century accounts of the church (e.g. in 1572-73 'xiiij s x d' was paid 'vnto the Earle of warwyckes seruants for a playe'). [Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 279.] It is likely that they performed at the church. As professional troupes such as the Earl of Warwick's players generally favoured playing indoors it is possible that at least some of the performances were staged within St Eustace's.

⁸⁰ *The Buildings of England: N Devon*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner (London: Penguin, 1952), p. 168.

In 1568-9 the All Saints' churchwardens recorded a payment of three shillings and four pence 'gevyn to the players'. [Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 283.] The performance may have taken place at the church.

⁸¹ In 1600 a King ale was held at the church. Church expenses relating to the ale included a payment of two shillings 'to Whitburne for his play'. This could be a payment to a musician, but it is also

possible that Whitburn was being paid for a play which he had written or organised for performance at the church during the ale. [J. Charles Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts from the fourteenth century to the close of the seventeenth century* (London: Methuen, 1913), p. 281.]

The present church of St Lawrence mostly dates from 1864 but some features from the medieval church are preserved, including the Norman south doorway. [*The Buildings of England: Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner and David Lloyd (London: Penguin, 1967), p. 725.]

- ⁸² *The Buildings of England: Shropshire*, ed. by Nikolaus Pevsner (London: Penguin, 1958), pp. 323-4. The Elizabethan Church and Chantry Wardens' accounts include two payments to players in 1588-9. Five shillings was given 'to players for there paynes' and a further two shillings was paid 'to Clauerley players'. [*REED: Shropshire*, ed. by J. Alan B. Somerset, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1994), I, p. 352.] The players may have been rewarded for performing at the church.

- ⁸³ In 1564-5 'Mr foskews men [...] playd at the chwrtch howse'. [*REED: Somerset*, ed. by James Stokes (with Robert J. Alexander), 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1996), I, p. 48.] The church house does not survive.

- ⁸⁴ Two performances are recorded at the vicarage in Plymouth in the late sixteenth century. In 1559-60 the town paid the 'playars of london which plaide at the mayors requeste in the vycarage'. [Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 234.] In 1575-6 another town payment was made 'to the players at the vicarige'. [Wasson, *REED: Devon*, p. 244.]

The vicarage used may have been that which belonged to St Andrew's Church, the town's largest medieval church (and a likely playing venue itself). In the Elizabethan and Jacobean period the vicarage of St Andrew's was on the corner of Whimble Street and St Andrew's Street. 'Its successor stood, until the late nineteenth century, on the site of the present post office.' [Information kindly provided by Josephine Howard, Archives Assistant, Devon Record Office, in a private communication (24 th August, 1999).] No trace of the original vicarage appears to survive. (There may have been another vicarage in the town, however, as Alan Somerset suggests that the vicarage used by the players is extant, but he does not identify it or cite the source of his information.) [Alan Somerset, ' "How chances it they travel?"': Provincial Touring, Playing Places, and the King's Men', *Shakespeare Survey*, 47 (1994), 45-60 (p. 56).]

- ⁸⁵ There are numerous payments for the use of the church house by players in the Elizabethan period (e.g. in 1567-8 John Dyer paid four pence 'for the Rome of the Churche house, to playe his enterludes yn, thre seuerall tymes', and in 1590-1 the Queen's players paid two shillings 'for the vse of the churchowse'). [Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 265, p. 272.] The church house building in Half Moon Street survives. In the Elizabethan period the ground floor was 'divided into four shops and a kitchen, rented out' by the churchwardens. The church house room (hired by the players) was in the upper storey. The upper floor 'seems to have been one long room'. [Rosalind Conklin Hays, 'Dorset Church Houses and the Drama', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 31 (1992), 13-23 (p. 14).] The room 'is now divided to accommodate three ground floor tenants, and a low ceiling in the upper room creates a third-storey attic. In the sixteenth century the 116" by 19" upper floor was open to the roof.' [Conklin Hays, 'Dorset Church houses', p. 14.]

- ⁸⁶ Several payments are recorded from players for the use of the parish house at Somerton in the Jacobean period (e.g. in 1605-6 twelve pence was received by St Michael's churchwardens 'of the Lord Shandos men the players for the vse of the parrishe house'). [Stokes, I, p. 219.] The house used as the parish house was bought in 1581-2 and 'was used for a time for ales and feasts' as well as plays, and 'by 1617-8 part of it functioned as a school.' [*REED: Somerset*, ed. by James Stokes, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1996), II, p. 490.] The house is no longer extant but 'it stood by the southern entrance to the churchyard and had a hall with a shop and kitchen beneath'. [Stokes, II, p. 490.]

- ⁸⁷ A number of payments were received by the St Cuthburga churchwardens for the use of the church house at Wimborne for plays (e.g. in 1573-4 fourpence was received from 'lohn merywether for a playe in the churche howse', and in 1589-90 two shillings was received 'of players that played in the church howse'). [Conklin Hays and McGee, Joyce and Newlyn, p. 283.] The church house was converted from St Peter's chapel and stood in the market-place. As Conklin Hays notes, 'the building had glass windows, a chimney with a hearth furnished with an iron bar, and plaster walls.' ['Dorset Church houses', p. 15.] The church house does not survive to the present.

Appendix ix

A Casting Scheme for *The Taming of A Shrew* for Fifteen Players

1. Polidor, a servant to carry on a table for Slie in the induction
2. Aurelius, one of the Lord's men
3. Alphonso, a servant to carry Slie off near the end
4. The Lord, one of the servants who brings Slie on for the end of the play
5. Ferando, a servant to carry Slie on in the induction
6. Phylotus, one of the players, one of the Lord's men who carries Slie off-stage at the beginning
7. Duke of Cestus, one of the Lord's men
8. Kate, a servant to carry Slie off-stage near the end
9. Valeria, one of the servants who carries on a table for Slie
10. Sander, one of the players, one of the servants who brings Slie on for the end of the play
11. Tapster, messenger, taylor, one of the servants who brings Slie back on-stage in the induction
12. Slie
13. Phylema, one of Ferando's servants
14. The boy player, Slie's player wife, Polidor's boy
15. Emilia, one of the Lord's men, one of Ferando's servants.

Appendix x

A list of English Provincial Drinking Houses used for Play Performances, 1559-1625

The following list includes drinking houses explicitly recorded as playing venues between 1559-1625. In most cases the spaces used are not recorded, but where there is indirect evidence suggesting a likely location this is noted in italics. Where possible I have identified whether the inn survives to the present. Those public houses which are extant (partly or entirely) and which continue to function as drinking houses are indicated with a *. Those buildings which only survive in part and which have been adapted for other uses are marked **. (All of the surviving buildings have been altered considerably since the early seventeenth century.)

<u>Place</u>	<u>Name of Drinking house</u>	<u>The Space</u>
Abingdon (Berkshire)	The New Inn ¹	
Cambridge (Cambridgeshire)	The Bear ²	
Canterbury (Kent)	The Checker** ³	
Congleton (Cheshire)	The Swan (*?) ⁴	
Coventry (Warwickshire)	The Angel	<i>Indoors</i> ⁵
Dorchester (Dorset)	[The George?] ⁶	'chamber' ⁷
Dover (Kent)	'sprytwelles' ⁸	
Kendal (Westmorland)	The Dragon ⁹	
Maidstone (Kent)	The Star ¹⁰	
Leicester (Leicestershire)		
Maldon (Essex)	The Blue Boar *	<i>Indoors</i> ¹¹
Norwich (Norfolk)	The Red Lion ¹²	The yard
	'Powles house' (The White Horse?) ¹³	
Windsor (Berkshire)	The George ¹⁴	

¹ In 1558-9 a payment was made by the corporation 'to serten players at the newyn.' [REED: *Berkshire*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston, forthcoming.] The Inn does not appear to survive to the present.

² In 1599 a performance was given by 'certayne players of interludes at ye signe of the beare'. [REED: *Cambridge*, ed. by Alan H. Nelson, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1989), I, p. 378.] The Bear (later known as the Black Bear) was 'used for political assemblies' in the seventeenth century, and as a concert hall from 1703 to 1809. [REED: *Cambridge*, ed. by Alan H. Nelson, 2 vols (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1989), II, pp. 1231-2.] The Bear does not survive today.

³ The Chequers Inn at Canterbury was 'built in the 1390s' and was 'apparently conceived as an overflow dormitory for the monastic hospice. Although it fairly rapidly acquired a higher social standing, the major rooms of the hospice seem to have been used for ordinary pilgrims until the dissolution.' [Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), p. 237.] The accommodation at the Inn included a 'huge garret at the top of the house,' said to have been 'the much-used dormitory of a host of pilgrims.' [J. Charles Cox, *Canterbury* (London: Methuen, 1905), p. 280.] As the garret would not have been functioning as a dormitory for pilgrims after the dissolution of the monastery, it may have been available for use for the play performances recorded at the inn, including that staged by the Queen's Men in 1608-9. ['Records of Plays and Players in Kent, 1450-1642', ed. by Giles Dawson, Malone Society: Collections, VII (Oxford: Oxford University, 1965), p. 18.] The Inn, which stood in Mercery Lane, was 'almost entirely destroyed by fire in 1865.' Today, the building is divided up into smaller premises, and only part of the outer structure of the inn survives. John Newman describes the modern street: 'The medieval timber structure is georgianized. All nine houses on the west side formed originally the Chequers Inn, which had a dormitory with a hundred beds. At the corner with the High Street, the ground floor has stone arcading, with continuous chamfers.' [*The Buildings of England: NE and*

East Kent, ed. by John Newman, 3rd edn (London: Penguin, 1969; repr. 1983), p. 251.]

- ⁴ In 1623 eleven shillings was given to 'the Kings players and the Earle of Derbeys the xliith daie of december who played at the Swanne.' [Alan C. Coman, 'The Congleton accounts: Further Evidence of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama in Cheshire', *REED: Newsletter*, 14:1 (1989), 3-18 (p. 9).] The Inn appears to have continued functioning in the late seventeenth century, as in 1688 the Swan is listed in records of the hearth tax that year: 'Of the top 12 per cent of households -those with 3 or more hearths- at least two were inns (the two houses with 7 hearths each), including the *Swan*.' [W. B. Stephens and Norah Fudge, 'Tudor and Stuart Congleton', in *History of Congleton*, ed. by W. B. Stephens (Manchester: Manchester University, 1970), 45-81 (p. 53).] By implication, the inn was a substantial building with numerous chambers.

Whether the inn survives to the present is more difficult to establish. Allusions to the Swan do not appear to be found after the seventeenth century. There are, however, references to the 'Lion and Swan' inn. This inn, which is still to be found in modern Congleton, is thought to date 'originally from the seventeenth century or before, though much of it has been restored and rebuilt,' and therefore might be the same inn as the early seventeenth century 'Swan'. [P. Timmis Smith, 'Congleton's Secular Buildings', in *History of Congleton* ed. ed. by W. B. Stephens (Manchester: Manchester University, 1970), 309-317 (p. 310).] The frontage of the present Lion and Swan is 'largely if not wholly restored' and 'is of timber-frame and plaster; the rest of the building is nineteenth century and of brick.' [Timmis, p. 310.]

- ⁵ The performance by Lord Chandos' Men at the Angel in 1600 was staged at night and therefore is likely to have been performed indoors. [R. W. Ingram, ed., *REED: Coventry* (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto; London: Manchester University, 1981), p. 356.]
- ⁶ The 1608 performance by Lord Berkeley's players at a Dorchester inn is alluded to in a Star Chamber case against local Dorchester man, Matthew Chubbe in the same year. The inn is not named in any of the depositions which refer to the performance. In their *REED* edition of Dorset's dramatic records, Conklin Hays and McGee note that 'the inn at which Berkeley's Men performed [...] was probably the George Inn.' The inn was destroyed by the town fire in 1613, but 'rebuilt when Matthew Chubbe [...] acquired its lease in 1617.' [*REED: Dorset / Cornwall*, ed. by Rosalind Conklin Hays and C. E. McGee, Sally L. Joyce and Evelyn S. Newlyn (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1999), p. 342.] The inn does not survive to the present. [Conklin Hays and McGee, p. 39.]
- ⁷ The 1608 performance by Lord Berkeley's players is described as occurring in a 'chamber in an Inne.' [Conklin Hays and McGee, p. 195.]
- ⁸ According to Giles Dawson, 'Sprytwelles' was 'a tavern keeper', making it likely that the performance recorded in 1569-70 was given at his tavern. [Dawson, p. 44.]
- ⁹ Two shillings and sixpence was paid 'to albert pearson y^e he layd forth to y^e players at y^e dragon the laste y^eare' in 1593-4. [*REED: Cumberland, Westmorland, Gloucestershire*, ed. by Audrey Douglas and Peter Greenfield (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1986), p. 174.] Although the payment may have been for entertaining the players at the inn, the fact that the money was given to, rather than spent upon, the players suggests that they were being paid for a performance at the inn. 'John Whitwell (*The Old Houses of Kendal*, p. 18), writing in 1866, says that an old inn, "The Green Dragon" was demolished to make way for a house built 1798-9 that Whitwell knew as the location of the Lancaster Bank. The site of "The Green Dragon" lies on the west side of Stricklandgate, just north of the present "Woolpack Inn" and a stone's throw from the old Moot Hall.' [Douglas and Greenfield, p. 231.]
- ¹⁰ Ten shillings was paid 'to the players that plaied at starre about Christmas' in 1587-8. [Dawson, p. 115.] There is no evidence that the inn survives today.
- ¹¹ The 1619 performance by Joseph Moore and the rest of the Lady Elizabeth's Men at the Blue Boar was an evening performance and therefore likely to have been staged indoors. (The performance continued 'vntill xi of the clocke in the Blue-Boore', prompting local bailiff, Francis to come and ask them to end the performance.) [A. Clark, 'Maldon Records and the Drama', *Notes and Queries*, 10th series, 8 (1907), 44-5 (p. 44).] (See plate 49)
- ¹² The Queen's Men performed in the yard at the Red Lion in 1583, the performance ending with the killing of a local man outside the inn after a dispute at the gate. [*REED: Norwich*, ed. by David Galloway (London, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1984), pp. 70-1.] The inn is not extant, but the yard appears to survive (although it may have altered considerably in size and shape since the sixteenth century): 'The yard is now known as Orford Place.' [D. F. Rowan, 'The Players

and Playing Places of Norwich', in *The Development of Shakespeare's Theater*, ed. by John H. Astington (New York: AMS Press, 1992), 77-94 (p. 89).]

¹³ Galloway identifies 'Powles house' as the White Horse ('Powl' being the name of the landord). At least one acting troupe is explicitly recorded as playing at 'Powles house' (the Queen's Men were authorised to play there for two days at Easter, 1615-16); and there are numerous references linking other troupes with the White Horse. [Galloway, p. xxx, p. 146.]

¹⁴ In 1620 John Marten wrote a letter of complaint to Mr Jones (one of the local Proctors) about Thomas Hall, a churchwarden and innkeeper in Windsor. His complaints included the fact that 'Thomas vpon Easter munday last in the tyme of Euening prayer was present at a play with many others, at the signe of the Georg in Windsor.' [Johnston, *REED: Berkshire*, forthcoming.] The inn does not appear to survive to the present.

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